

**Examining Contextual Particles in Lutsotso Interactions: A Disco-Pragmatic
Approach**

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DEDICATION

This research is sincerely dedicated to my supportive parents who encouraged and inspired me in conducting this study. They never abandoned me throughout the process and gave me strength and hope when I thought of giving up. They provided me with a great sense of enthusiasm and perseverance in continuing.

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ABSTRACT

Discourse particles are common in unprompted transmission of information and serve important role in what is articulated during communication and are indispensable in all registers. This study, titled *"Examining Contextual Discourse Particles in Lutsotso Interactions: A Disco-Pragmatic Approach,"* investigates the role of discourse particles (DPs) in Lutsotso communication, with a focus on their pragmatic functions and contributions to contextual meaning. Specifically, the objectives of the study are: (i) to explore the pragmatic functions of DPs in Lutsotso interactions; (ii) to examine how DPs account for contextual meaning in such interactions; and (iii) to assess the extent to which Relevance Theory (RT) explains the use of DPs in these contexts. Grounded in the theoretical framework of Relevance Theory by Sperber and Wilson (1986), the study further incorporates insights from discourse analysis, including conversation analysis and pragmatics, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how discourse particles operate within real-time language use. The adoption of a disco-pragmatic approach—which blends discourse analysis and pragmatic theory—is crucial in this study as it enables the contextual interpretation of discourse particles not just at the utterance level but also in relation to speaker intention, shared assumptions, and conversational goals. Data were collected through elicitation and naturalistic extraction methods. Elicitation involved direct interaction with speakers to obtain context-specific uses of DPs, while extraction involved identifying and analyzing naturally occurring conversations. The study employed purposive and snowball sampling techniques to identify competent native speakers of Lutsotso across varied interactional settings. 21 discourse particles were sampled and analyzed. Key findings reveal that discourse particles in Lutsotso perform essential pragmatic functions such as managing turn-taking, indicating speaker attitude, structuring discourse, and guiding listener inference. These particles are pivotal in shaping contextual meaning and ensuring coherence in interaction. Furthermore, while Relevance Theory accounts for many inferential aspects of DP use, its explanatory power is enhanced when used alongside discourse-pragmatic and conversational analytic insights. The implications of this study are multifaceted. For language practitioners and second language learners (SLLs), understanding the role of DPs fosters better communication, clearer writing, and more effective speaking. The findings support integrating discourse particle usage into language education to enhance communicative competence, particularly in contexts where English functions as a second language. Additionally, the study underscores the significance of preserving local languages like Lutsotso, recognizing their essential contribution to socio-cultural identity, political engagement, and economic development.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

Context- this is the environment that forms discourse that influences the comprehension of the

functions of discourse particles

Context of Situation- refers to the non-linguistic elements surrounding a communicative act that

influence its meaning and interpretation.

Conversation- this refers to communication between two or more people that is interactive.

Conversational Implicature-this entails the implicit meaning of an utterance, which is not explicitly stated but is understood by the listener based on context and shared knowledge.

Discourse Particles-these are markers that are used to direct or redirect the flow of a conversation

without adding any significant paraphrasable meaning to the discourse.

Interaction-this refers to the dynamic process through which individuals communicate and

exchange information.

Politeness-this comprises linguistic and non-linguistic behavior through which people indicate

that they take others' feelings of how they should be treated into account.

Pragmatic-entails the analysis of discourse particles in a way that is practical and theoretical

Speech act-refers to the action performed by speakers when they make utterances.

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AS- Action Structure

CP- Cognitive Principle

DOs-Discourse Operators

DPs-Discourse Particles

KBS-Kenya Bureau of Standards

MLT- Mother Tongue Language

PF- Participation Framework

PP- Pragmatic Particle

RT-Relevance Theory

CLC- Cross-Linguistic Comparison

UG- Universal Grammar

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction to The Study

The chapter provides background information to the study of study of discourse particles (DPs) and further presents the statement of the problem, the research objectives, research questions, justification of the study, significance of the study, and finally scope and limitations of the study.

1.2 Background to The Study

Research on discourse particles (DPs) has grown substantially over the past three decades (Fischer, 2006). However, traditional grammatical frameworks have often proven inadequate in capturing their full communicative function (Fraser, 1999). According to Fraser (1999), discourse particles are not integral to syntactic structures and do not contribute to the propositional content of utterances, yet they fulfill essential pragmatic roles.

Discourse particles have emerged as a pivotal area of inquiry in pragmatics and discourse analysis due to their significant role in structuring interaction, conveying speaker attitudes, and guiding interpretation. These small lexical items—such as *well*, *you know*, *like*, *so*, or *eh*—serve crucial communicative functions (Schiffrin, 1987; Blakemore, 2002). Their analysis requires attention not only to their formal properties but also to the dynamic interplay between linguistic form, context, and cognition.

This study examines discourse particles using Relevance Theory from a disco-pragmatic perspective, focusing on the influence of context on their interpretation. The study sought to further the knowledge of the procedural role of discourse particles in natural speech,

focusing on how speakers utilize these features to navigate interpersonal relationships, maintain textual coherence, and mitigate cognitive strain in communication.

The concept of pragmatics is essential in the examination of discourse particles (DPs). Pragmatics and discourse particles are interconnected domains within linguistics, especially focusing on the function, meaning, and contextual use of language. Pragmatics examines how context affects meaning in communication, while discourse particles frequently obtain their significance from their contextual usage, rendering their analysis essential to pragmatic studies. Kecskes (2020) asserts that pragmatics is a branch of linguistics focused on the impact of context on meaning interpretation in communication. In contrast to semantics, which analyzes the literal meanings of words and phrases, pragmatics investigates the practical use of language by speakers, taking into account aspects such as social context, connections, goals, and the circumstances surrounding communication. Pragmatics pertains to the utilization and interpretation of language by interlocutors in social contexts, encompassing both explicit and implicit meanings.

According to Yus (2016), pragmatics encompasses three fundamental aspects: the interpretation of meaning beyond literal content, the significance of context, and the dynamics of interaction in discourse interpretation. This indicates that pragmatics primarily focuses on comprehending how speakers communicate meanings that extend beyond the literal definitions of words. This encompasses our interpretation of intentions, inferences, and the implicit aspects of communication. In addition to that, we possess context. Pragmatics underscores the significance of context—both verbal and extralinguistic, such as cultural, social, or physical context—in determining the meaning of utterances. This is

essential as words may possess varying meanings based on the context of their usage, including time, location, and manner. Context is crucial to pragmatic interpretation, as highlighted in pragmatic literature (Levinson, 1983; Yus, 2016). The interpretation of an utterance varies based on the speaker, the audience, and the context. The final worry pertains to interactional dynamics.

Pragmatics examines the mechanisms via which individuals negotiate meaning during dialogues. This includes turn-taking, civility techniques, and the management of uncertainty, interruptions, and topic shifts by speakers.

Pragmatics is founded on essential principles that act as its foundational pillars. The Speech Act Theory, established by Austin (1962) and further developed by Searle (1969), categorizes utterances into locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. It asserts that language transcends mere factual representation and encompasses the execution of activities. Each utterance can be seen as executing a function, including affirming, inquiring, demanding, and promising. Speech acts can be categorized into three types: locutionary acts, illocutionary acts, and perlocutionary acts (Searle, 1969).

Conversational implicature is a fundamental notion in pragmatics. This concept was introduced by Grice in the 1970s. Conversational implicatures denote the inferred meanings or implications that emerge in dialogue. These are implicit norms and collective knowledge. Grice (1975) introduced four conversational maxims—quantity, quality, relevance, and manner—to elucidate the generation of implicatures in encounters.

Additionally, conversational engagement is a fundamental idea in the domain of pragmatics. This notion examines the utilization of language in social interactions, emphasizing the

negotiation of meaning during real-time talks. Levinson (2004) emphasizes that real-time interaction encompasses turn-taking mechanisms, repair procedures, and politeness techniques, all of which are crucial for controlling communicative purpose.

Having briefly examined the overview of pragmatics, we can now proceed to explore discourse particles (DPs). Discourse particles are typically syntactically optional, semantically diminished, and serve significant pragmatic or interactional roles (Fischer, 2006; Blakemore, 2002). They frequently indicate speaker sentiments, organize discourse, or regulate conversational flow. This indicates that they are generally syntactically autonomous, semantically diminished, and fulfill diverse roles pertaining to discourse structure, speaker disposition, or interpersonal dynamics.

Discourse particles (DPs) are extensively classified according to their function. Blakemore (2002) classifies discourse particles (DPs) into categories, specifically modal particles that convey the speaker's attitude. Additionally, there are discourse markers that indicate transitions or links between statements. They additionally indicate contrast or focus. Additionally, there exist hesitation particles employed during speech formulation or pauses. Furthermore, there exists another category—response particles—which signify agreement, disagreement, acknowledgment, or backchanneling. Additionally, there exist focus particles that accentuate or limit significance. Additionally, filler particles constitute a distinct subcategory employed to occupy pauses in speech as the speaker contemplates or organizes their thoughts. Additionally, incorporate particles that appear at the conclusion of sentences to provoke confirmation or involvement. Each subcategory fulfills distinct functions that enhance the coherence and interactivity of spoken or written language.

Discourse particles can be categorized into three primary groups based on their functions. Aijmer (2002) delineates three primary functional types of discourse particles: textual, interpersonal, and cognitive/processing functions.

Discourse particles can occupy multiple positions inside a sentence or utterance, and their placement frequently affects their function and meaning. Discourse particles positioned at the beginning of a turn frame the subsequent remark or denote the speaker's viewpoint. Conversely, the medial position facilitates the insertion of discourse particles (DPs) within the sentence or utterance to alter the tone or signify a shift in focus. In sentence-final position, discourse particles (DPs) frequently function to solicit input, affirm comprehension, or convey the speaker's disposition. Additionally, there exists an emphatic position in which certain discourse particles are positioned to highlight a specific segment of the sentence or utterance. Finally, there exists a filler position in which filled pauses or hesitations manifest during speaking to indicate that the speaker is still formulating thoughts.

The precise placement of discourse particles can alter their function; hence, comprehending the context and unique dialogue can elucidate their role in meaning and engagement. Primarily, based on our observations, there are three positions: beginning, medial, and final. The examination of discourse particles (DPs) in pragmatics offers significant insights into the nuances of human communication. Discourse particles (DPs) not only promote seamless and coherent exchanges but also include the subtleties of speaker purpose and social dynamics, rendering them indispensable for comprehending pragmatics in its entirety.

1.3 Lutsotso

Lutsotso is a Bantu dialect within the Oluluhya cluster, utilized by the Batsotso people predominantly in Kakamega County, specifically in areas including Butsotso North, South, West, East, and Central (Ethnologue, 2023; Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2019).

It shares a common linguistic progenitor with other Oluluhya dialects (Nurse, D., & Philipson, G., 2003). The Lutsotso language has a crucial role in the Luhyia community and Kenyan society at large, especially in safeguarding cultural heritage and fostering social cohesion (UNESCO, 2003; Wanjawa, 2023). It fortifies cultural identity by actively preserving and promoting cultural values, traditions, and behaviors. This can be accomplished via education, community engagement, and policy endorsement (UNESCO, 2003). Amanda (2022) contends that cultural identification fosters a sense of belonging, influences values and traditions, and engenders a robust sense of community. Focusing intently on education and cultural legacy, there exists a component of instruction and acquisition of knowledge. Educational institutions function as essential venues for the intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge, beliefs, and practices, in accordance with worldwide standards on indigenous language instruction (UNESCO, 2003; Hornberger, 2008).

In addition, heritage preservation encompasses actions such as documenting oral histories, conserving art and artifacts, and imparting traditional skills. Therefore, there is a significant necessity to study the Lutsotso language, an indigenous African language. Linguists and language policymakers must acknowledge the crucial function of Lutsotso in cultural transmission and social identity, necessitating its recording and promotion (Abdul & Alhassan, 2022; Wanjawa, 2023).

Lutsotso not only preserves culture but also enhances daily communication and the dissemination of indigenous knowledge systems (Nekesa, 2021). Lutsotso, as a symbol of cultural identity, bolsters communal pride and strengthens the sense of kinship among the Batsotso people (Wanjawa, 2023; UNESCO, 2003).

The Lutsotso language positively influences Kenyan society as a whole, extending beyond the Luhya community. Lutsotso, when incorporated into formal schooling, fosters bilingualism and multilingualism, skills that are progressively esteemed in a globalized environment (Bamgbose, 2000; Heugh, 2011).

From an educational standpoint, studying the Lutsotso language can enhance children's academic performance and foster a deeper comprehension of Kenyan society and culture. We are in an era of rapid technological advancement, when projects like Kencorpus, which encompass diverse Luhya dialects, are crucial for the development of computational linguistics tools, including machine learning systems and NLP technologies (Kencorpus, 2023). Ultimately, from the perspective of cultural variety, the study of this language enhances the linguistic diversity of Kenya, so enriching the nation's cultural landscape.

1.4 Statement of The Problem

Understanding the use of contextual particles in Lutsotso remains limited despite their crucial role in conveying meaning, attitude, and social relationships within communication. These particles often function as pragmatic markers that influence the interpretation of utterances, yet their precise roles, functions, and contextual dependencies are not well documented from a disco-pragmatic perspective.

Existing studies have largely focused on phonological, syntactic, or semantic aspects of Lutsotso, leaving a gap in understanding how contextual particles operate within real-life interactions and how they facilitate effective communication. Moreover, the influence of socio-cultural factors on the deployment of the particles remains underexplored.

The gap impedes a comprehensive understanding of how Lutsotso speakers use contextual particles to negotiate meaning, manage conversational dynamics, and express nuances such as politeness, emphasis, or skepticism. Therefore, there is need to investigate the functions and contextual usage of these particles from a discourse-pragmatic approach, which emphasizes the dynamic and interactional aspects of language use within social contexts.

1.5 Purpose of The Study

The purpose of this study is to understand how these particles function to create meaning within specific social and communicative contexts. This analysis aims to first of all, to identify the role of contextual particles in determining how discourse particles such as mood particles, emphasis indicators, or pragmatic particles influence the interpretation of utterances in Lutsotso conversations. Secondly, understand discourse functions by exploring how these particles contribute to managing turn-taking, expressing attitudes, signaling politeness, and establishing social relationships during interactions.

Apart from that, the study also aims at analyzing pragmatic and discourse features by investigating how discourse particles encode speaker intentions, manage politeness strategies, and facilitate coherence and cohesion in utterances within the Lutsotso-speaking community. To add on that, the study aims to highlight cultural and social norms by revealing how the use of contextual discourse particles reflects cultural values, social

hierarchy, and identity within Lutsotso interactions. Finally, the study aims to contribute to theoretical insights by enhancing the understanding of disco-pragmatic theories by providing empirical data from Lutsotso, thereby broadening the scope of pragmatic research in lesser-studied languages.

1.6 General Objective of The Study

The general objective is to explore how Lutsotso speakers use discourse particles in everyday conversations to achieve specific communicative and social effects, and how these particles contribute to meaning beyond the literal interpretation of words, using both discourse and pragmatic analytical tools.

1.7 Research Objectives of The Study

1. To evaluate the pragmatic functions of discourse particles in Lutsotso interactions.
2. To examine how discourse particles account for Contextual Meaning in Lutsotso interactions.
3. To assess the context to which the Relevance Theory accounts for discourse particles in Lutsotso interactions.

1.8 Research Questions

1. What pragmatic functions do discourse particles play in Lutsotso interactions?
2. How do discourse particles account for contextual meaning in Lutsotso interactions?
3. How does Relevance Theory account for discourse particles in Lutsotso interactions?

1.9 Justification of The Study

This study aims to fill gaps in the literature about the pragmatic mechanics of discourse particle usage in interactions within African languages. Comprehending the intricate functions of language within social contexts is essential for both linguistic and communicative proficiency (Levinson, 1983; Yule, 1996). In Lutsotso, a Bantu language of western Kenya, contextual discourse particles play a crucial role in meaning construction, politeness management, stance expression, and social cohesion facilitation during interactions (Aijmer, 2002; Schiffrin, 1987; Blass, 1990).

Despite their functional significance, minimal scholarly focus has been directed into the role of these particles in Lutsotso discourse. This study employs a discourse-pragmatic method, offering a comprehensive framework for studying the utilization of particles beyond their superficial lexical meaning by contextualizing them inside actual communicative scenarios (Blakemore, 2002; Fraser, 1999). This viewpoint facilitates the examination of how speakers utilize such particles to execute speech acts, convey attitudes, and navigate social connections, thereby revealing their pragmatic purposes in everyday contact.

The study is warranted for multiple reasons. Initially, it aids in language documentation by examining and delineating underrepresented pragmatic characteristics of Lutsotso (Himmelmann, 2006). Furthermore, it promotes cross-cultural comprehension by fostering intercultural communication proficiency among language learners, educators, and researchers engaged with Lutsotso speakers (Saville-Troike, 2003). Thirdly, the study provides theoretical significance by enhancing discourse-pragmatic theory with empirical data from a less-explored language, thereby illuminating the universality and diversity of pragmatic phenomena. The findings had practical implications: they can enhance language

instruction, translation, and language preservation initiatives by highlighting the significance of contextual particles in expressing meaning and social intent.

The work enhances our comprehension of the pragmatic complexities of Lutsotso interactions and contributes to theoretical linguistics and applied language studies.

1.10 Significance of The Study

Examining contextual discourse particles (DPs) in Lutsotso interactions through a disco-pragmatic lens is significant because it reveals how speakers manage meaning, social relationships, and conversational flow in real time. Specifically, this study enhances our understanding of communicative nuance within a culturally grounded context. Discourse particles in Lutsotso—similar to those in many other languages—do not carry independent propositional content. Instead, they function to guide the interpretation of utterances, manage turn-taking, express stance, and indicate speaker intention (Fischer, 2006; Schifffrin, 1987). These functions are highly context-dependent, relying on the surrounding discourse, social setting, and interlocutor relationships (Blakemore, 2002).

Furthermore, the significance of this study stems from its contribution to the cultural and linguistic documentation of Lutsotso, a dialect within the Luhyia language cluster spoken in western Kenya. By analyzing discourse particles, the research helps to preserve indigenous oral linguistic practices, many of which remain underrepresented in formal linguistic literature (Nurse & Philippson, 2003).

In addition, this study adopts a disco-pragmatic approach, which integrates the principles of discourse analysis—how language is used in real-world interactions—with pragmatic theory, which focuses on how meaning is inferred beyond the literal interpretation of words.

This approach enables the researcher to uncover conversational strategies, examine how meaning and social roles are negotiated, and identify implicit cultural norms embedded in language use (Al-Hindawi & Saffah, 2017). As such, disco-pragmatics emphasizes that language is not merely a system of grammatical structures but a dynamic resource employed to achieve social and communicative goals.

Finally, the study holds broader linguistic relevance by contributing to cross-linguistic comparisons (CLC) of discourse particles. Sari (2007) argues that CLC highlights both universal and language-specific features of DPs, shedding light on their roles in conversational management and discourse structuring. Alvarez (2014) adds that cross-linguistic studies can support the development of Universal Grammar by identifying recurring functional patterns across languages. These comparisons also enrich our understanding of language variation, facilitate second language acquisition by exposing learners to subtle functional differences, and support interdisciplinary collaborations among fields such as linguistics, pragmatics, and discourse studies.

1.11 Scope and Limitation of The Study

The research largely concentrated on the analysis of Lutsotso discourse particles (DPs). These are minor functional components—often termed discourse markers in pragmatic studies—that affect turn-taking, subject transitions, and the coherence of interactions (Schourup, 1999; Jucker & Ziv, 1998). The primary focus was the pragmatic functions of these particles in natural discourse. This study employed a disco-pragmatic context analysis

to investigate the role of discourse particles (DPs) in Lutsotso, given their common use in managing conversational flow across several languages (Fischer, 2006).

Based on Relevance Theory (Sperber & Wilson, 1995) and Conversation Analysis (Levinson, 1983), the study examined the role of each discourse particle (DP) within its interactive context, influencing meaning negotiation, attention management, and interpersonal alignment. Empirical data were obtained from spontaneous Lutsotso interactions, corroborated by native speaker intuitions, to identify recurrent particles and their contextual functions. A qualitative descriptive methodology was employed, supported by the previously indicated theoretical frameworks, instead of quantitative or formal semantic models.

This research encountered specific restrictions, as is common in many qualitative investigations. The methodology depended on particular recordings and speaker intuitions, hence constraining the representativeness of dialectal and infrequent particle usage. The sample was additionally constrained by access limits and time restrictions. The data were predominantly oral and informal, indicating that the conclusions may not be applicable to written or formal conversation. Certain participants were accessible only temporarily, and financial constraints further restricted the scope.

Restricted access to participants is a recognized obstacle in qualitative research, frequently affecting the diversity and generalizability of results (Taherdoost, 2021). To tackle this issue, the researcher utilized several recruitment tactics and offered rewards where appropriate.

The study also lacked a cross-linguistic analysis. Despite being rooted in recognized pragmatic theories, it did not juxtapose Lutsotso DPs with those in other languages. The literature review faced difficulties due to the scarcity of previous research particularly addressing Lutsotso DPs. Consequently, the researcher established a novel typology to facilitate the investigation (Booth et al., 2008).

1.11 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented the theoretical and contextual framework for a pragmatic analysis of discourse in Lutsotso. The exploration commenced with the concept of pragmatics, a fundamental subject of linguistics that examines the impact of context on meaning interpretation (Levinson, 1983; Yule, 1996). Pragmatics transcends the literal interpretation of language by analyzing how utterances are influenced by speaker intentions, social dynamics, and communicative context.

In contrast to syntax and semantics, which emphasize grammatical structures and propositional content, pragmatics concentrates on the practical application of language in real-world contexts. It is frequently characterized as the examination of how speakers utilize language in context and how listeners comprehend this usage (Mey, 2001). Principal concerns of pragmatics encompass intention, inference, context, politeness, and implicature.

The chapter delineated some fundamental principles in pragmatic analysis. Speech Act Theory, established by Austin (1962) and advanced by Searle (1969), asserts that words can execute actions, including requesting, apologizing, or commanding. These actions are classified into locutionary (literal meaning), illocutionary (speaker's intention), and perlocutionary (listener's affect) aspects.

Secondly, Conversational Implicature, as established by Grice (1975), elucidates how speakers convey meanings that extend beyond explicit statements. Grice introduced cooperative principles and conversational maxims—quantity, quality, relevance, and manner—that direct interpretation in quotidian discourse.

Thirdly, Talk in Interaction, based on Conversation Analysis (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974), highlights the organization of spoken discourse, encompassing turn-taking, repair strategies, adjacency pairs, and sequencing in conversation. These features facilitate our comprehension of how conversational meaning is collaboratively formed.

Finally, discourse particles are pragmatic markers that fulfill non-propositional roles, like regulating turn-taking, expressing posture, or signaling coherence in interactions (Schourup, 1999; Jucker & Ziv, 1998). In the context of Lutsotso, such particles may be culturally distinctive, influencing etiquette, conversational dynamics, or speaker purpose.

The chapter offered a summary of Lutsotso, a dialect of the Luhya language cluster utilized by the Abatsotso community in Western Kenya. Belonging to the Bantu language family, it possesses structural similarities with related dialects while displaying distinct phonological and pragmatic characteristics. Notwithstanding its extensive oral legacy, Lutsotso is little researched about its pragmatic use, particularly in authentic interactions—an assertion supported by recent literature on African linguistics (cf. Nurse & Philippson, 2003; Bukenya et al., 2020).

The problem statement emphasized the deficiency of study regarding the pragmatic language use among Lutsotso speakers. Although current linguistic research predominantly focuses on grammatical and phonological aspects, there is little investigation into the

negotiation of meaning through interaction, especially with speech acts, implicatures, and discourse particles.

This study is justified on multiple grounds, including its linguistic contribution. It contributes to African linguistics by recording the pragmatic characteristics of a lesser-studied dialect. Theoretical relevance assesses the applicability of mainstream pragmatic theories into a non-Western environment. Furthermore, sociocultural insight. It demonstrates how Lutsotso linguistic practices embody social norms, power relations, and communal values. Ultimately, the preservation of language: This study documents Lutsotso's discourse habits, thereby aiding initiatives to combat language endangerment.

The study's importance was examined from a disco-pragmatic viewpoint. Firstly, it provides academic value by enhancing pragmatic theory with practical evidence derived from indigenous African contexts. Secondly, it provides methodological innovation through the introduction of a disco-pragmatic approach specifically designed for oral, interactional discourse. Thirdly, it provides practical utility by guiding language policy, education, and intercultural communication. Ultimately, it provides cultural representation by highlighting indigenous communicative methods and bolstering cultural pride.

In conclusion, the chapter prepares for a practical examination of Lutsotso interactions, highlighting essential concepts and offering a framework for comprehending the construction of meaning in context.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction to The Chapter

The chapter provides literature review on the functions of discourse particles (DPs), the analysis of discourse particles (DPs) in relation to context, and the interrelatedness between Relevance Theory and the discourse particles (DPs). It goes further to look at the theoretical frameworks adopted in this study.

2.2 General Functions of Discourse Particles

Discourse particles (DPs), often described as short and typically unstressed linguistic elements, have minimal lexical content but play a crucial role in structuring spoken discourse (Schiffrin, 1987; Fraser, 1999). These particles, sometimes referred to as discourse markers, are typically used to manage interaction, express speaker stance, or help structure the conversation. These include markers such as “well,” “you know,” “like,” “I mean,” and “actually,” which have been extensively discussed in pragmatic and sociolinguistic research (Schiffrin, 1987; Erman, 2001).

Their pragmatic functions are multifaceted and vary across languages and cultures, but they share certain features in conversational settings. This review will explore the pragmatic roles of discourse particles in interaction, drawing on key studies and theories from sociolinguistics, pragmatics, and conversation analysis.

As Schifffrin (1987) defines them, discourse particles are “linguistic elements that do not directly contribute to the propositional content of a sentence but serve various functions in structuring discourse,” highlighting their organizational rather than semantic roles in communication. According to several scholars, these particles can serve different functions, including indicating turn-taking, managing discourse structure, signaling speaker intentions, and conveying social information (Erman, 2001; Andersen, 2001).

Erman (2001) examined how discourse particles like "well" in English are used to initiate a turn, manage the progress of conversation, and show the speaker's orientation toward the upcoming contribution. In this context, the particle functions as a cue to the hearer that the speaker is about to say something that may not align with expectations, such as a correction, a qualification, or a shift in topic. According to Erman (2001), discourse particles function as procedural elements that assist in organizing discourse by signaling upcoming contributions, managing transitions, and indicating the speaker's stance. She emphasizes their interpersonal and cognitive roles in facilitating fluency and coherence during interaction. In her comprehensive study, Erman (2001) emphasizes that pragmatic markers—commonly functioning as discourse particles—serve procedural roles that help structure interaction, manage cognitive load, and indicate interpersonal relations, rather than contributing to the core propositional meaning. Her work contributes significantly to understanding their multifunctional nature and how they operate within discourse. Erman argues that discourse particles primarily carry procedural meaning rather than conceptual content. This means they guide how to interpret the propositional content of an utterance, rather than adding information themselves.

Particles help organize discourse by indicating how utterances relate to each other. For example, they may: signal transitions (e.g., *so*, *well*), indicate elaboration or explanation, and mark the beginning or end of a conversational move. Erman emphasizes that particles often serve interpersonal or interactional purposes, such as: Softeners (*you know*, *I mean*), hedging or showing politeness, and managing turn-taking and signaling attentiveness (e.g., *yeah*, *right*). She also notes that discourse particles may help speakers manage cognitive load and maintain fluency in real-time speech, allowing time for planning and reducing disfluencies. Particles contribute to textual coherence by linking propositions and helping the listener follow the speaker's line of thought.

Erman's corpus analysis revealed that numerous pragmatic markers are prevalent and frequently occur in prefabricated phrases or fixed formulations, emphasizing their standardized role in conversation. Erman (2021) significantly advanced the comprehension of the operational dynamics of these aspects in language. Nonetheless, the constraints have been regularly acknowledged in the literature. Firstly, there is an absence of standardized terminology. She frequently employs many terminology, such as discourse markers, discourse particles, and pragmatic markers, interchangeably, resulting in conceptual ambiguity. This study employs a singular term: discourse particles (DPs). A notable weakness seen in her work is the presence of overgeneralization. The study categorizes particles excessively broadly (e.g., "marking contrast" or "signaling speaker attitude") without accounting for contextual subtleties.

Schiffrin (1987) and Fraser (1996) assert that speech particles are chiefly employed to regulate conversational flow, direct engagement, and foster mutual comprehension among interlocutors. Their major purpose is to indicate the speaker's position, disposition, or

emotions toward previous or forthcoming statements, while also maintaining the conversation's coherence and collaboration.

One of the most significant pragmatic purposes of discourse particles is their role in regulating turn-taking and indicating the speaker's intentions in dialogue. Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974) noted that discourse particles such as “uh,” “um,” and “well” serve as markers of hesitation or indications for transition, facilitating turn-taking and maintaining conversational flow.

These particles help maintain smooth flow in interaction by signaling to the interlocutor that the speaker is not finished and intends to continue or has not yet formulated a complete thought.

Discourse particles are frequently used to hedge or mitigate statements, making them less direct and therefore socially acceptable in certain contexts. Common particles for hedging include "kind of," "sort of," and "like." These particles soften the force of an utterance, allowing speakers to express uncertainty, politeness, or a degree of tentativeness. For example, in a sentence like "I'm kind of tired," the particle "kind of" reduces the commitment of the speaker to the proposition.

Holmes (1995) notes that hedging via discourse particles is crucial in managing face-threatening acts, such as issuing criticisms or making suggestions. These markers help mitigate the potential social friction by softening the speaker's intent. These particles allow speakers to maintain social harmony by distancing themselves from potentially confrontational or face-threatening statements.

Discourse particles also serve an essential role in conveying the speaker's stance toward the propositional content of an utterance. For example, "you know" and "I mean" signal that the speaker is offering an interpretation of their statement or providing additional clarification. These particles function as cues to the listener that the speaker is aligning themselves with the content in a particular way, either by emphasizing the truthfulness, relevance, or importance of what is being said.

Schiffrin (1987) identified "you know" as a discourse marker that helps reinforce shared knowledge between participants and creates a sense of solidarity. The use of such particles indicates that the speaker expects the hearer to be familiar with the topic and, thus, contributes to the construction of common ground. Discourse particles are often used in managing disagreements or initiating repair in conversation. For instance, particles like "actually" or "but" serve to introduce corrective or contrasting information. These particles often function as signals to the hearer that the speaker is modifying or correcting their previous statement.

Andersen (2001) examined how particles like "actually" function as markers of correction, particularly when a speaker wants to reframe or adjust a previous statement. These particles introduce a contrastive perspective and signal that the speaker is diverging from what was previously stated or understood. Similarly, repair particles such as "what I meant was" or "I mean" often appear in cases where the speaker seeks to clarify a miscommunication or correct a misunderstanding. Discourse particles also play an important role in establishing coherence and structure in conversation. Particles like "so," "then," and "anyway" function to organize discourse, signaling shifts between topics, summarizing prior points, or indicating a transition to a new phase in the conversation (Fraser, 1999). By acting as

connectors, these particles guide the listener through the conversational flow, helping to create a coherent narrative or argument. According to Tottie (1991), the particle "so" in English can function as a marker of cause and effect, signaling a conclusion or result of prior discourse.

While the functions of discourse particles are broadly similar across languages, there are notable cross-linguistic and cross-cultural variations in their use. Research shows that while discourse particles appear across languages, their functions and nuances differ. In German, particles like *halt* and *doch* function similarly to English *you know* or *well*, but carry culture-specific nuances (Schwenter, 2006). Mandarin particles such as *a* and *ne* serve to soften statements or facilitate interaction (Erkner & Yuan, 2016), while in Japanese, *ne* fosters solidarity, and *yo* asserts information (Maynard, 1993). In Mandarin Chinese, particles like "a" and "ne" serve to soften assertions and facilitate turn-taking, showing the importance of culture-specific patterns in discourse particle use (Erkner & Yuan, 2016).

In Japanese, discourse particles like “ne” and “yo” are linked to politeness and social hierarchy, with “ne” fostering solidarity and “yo” asserting speaker stance (Maynard, 1993).

These cultural differences underline the complex interaction between pragmatic functions of discourse particles and the socio-cultural contexts in which they are used. Interruptions, while often considered impolite, may be contextually appropriate, especially when aimed at correcting misinformation or redirecting conversation constructively (Vozza, 2023; Windingland, 2013). Thorneborrow (2007) suggests that even interruptions can foster rapport if done tactfully and purposefully. Other reasons include needing to provide timely input, getting a meeting or conversation back on track, or cutting off a long-winded talker. Politeness, while manifesting differently across cultures, is considered a universal

communicative norm. Huang (2008) argues that all societies exhibit forms of politeness, though the linguistic strategies to express it vary.

This means that the practical application of good manners or etiquette is in all societies and it is demonstrated differently. Each and every society has its own unique way of showing it. Thorneborrow (2007), observes that cutting in politely is done for a particular or specific purpose to strengthen the bond between the interlocutors to avoid misunderstanding that can arise during a conversation. In addition to that, one should always remember that politeness is indicated by shunning away from impolite cutting in and it appears to prevent misunderstandings between diverse cultures (Huang,2008).

According to Brown (2015), politeness helps greatly in the regulation of one's emotions. This means that there should be an ability to respond to the demands of experience with the range of emotions and this should be in line with the social norms. The use of etiquette in communication is made possible by the use of discourse particles, which are used to avoid conflicts between the speaker and the auditor. According to Leech (1973), the method used to do away with animosity is by the use of these particles and they enhance a good relationship between the interlocutors. This implies that politeness can help the language users to manage and solve conflicts in a better way.

Makuto (2009) asserts that discourse particles are utterance-bound and oriented toward an interlocutor, thus carrying illocutionary force. Similarly, Schourup (1983) underscores their multifunctionality, including marking cognitive processes and organizing turn-taking. It therefore has an illocutionary force realized in the functions that it serves in the outcome of an exchange. Schourup (1983) notes that discourse particles have multiple functions and one of them is that it allows the speaker to show his or her mental processes in an appropriate

manner this implies that there is room in the tone of a conversation for much private thought. We form overall judgments, plan provisional responses, rank and revise store questions, foresee the need for further conversation and routinely do these things while someone else is talking or while we ourselves hold the turn.

Georgakopoulou and Goutusos, (1997) said that the functions of discourse particles are essentially traceable to Halliday's (1994) tripartite division of language functions into ideational, textual and interpersonal. The textual function covers the stringing together and segmenting of units for example, the signalling of topic shifts and continuities, the return to topics after digressions the interpersonal function covers the relation between addressor and addressee and the expression of the subjective elements of linguistic communication e.g. feelings and attitudes.

It is on this basis that the functions of discourse markers were categorized. In a conversation, the exchange is so defined that it produces results. The constitution of the results is determined by the illocutionary (and other) acts, which are realized by the elements of which the exchange is, composed (Edmondson, 1981). A discourse particle being part of the utterance is produced by a speaker in reference to an addressee (Makuto, 2009). It therefore has an illocutionary force realized in the functions that it serves in the outcome of an exchange. Schourup (1983) notes that discourse particles have multiple functions and one of them is that it allows the speaker to show his or her mental processes in an appropriate manner this implies that there is room in the tone of a conversation for much private thought. We form overall judgments, plan provisional responses, rank and revise store questions, foresee the need for further conversation and routinely do these things while someone else is talking or while we ourselves hold the turn.

The idea of linking and subdividing of components are covered under the textual function for instance, when one wants to mark the change of topic and unbrokenness and consistency in the communication pattern, the return to topics after diversion the interpersonal function covers the relation between addressor and addressee and the expression of the subjective elements of linguistic communication for example, feelings and attitudes.

Discourse particles serve several critical pragmatic functions in conversation, including managing turn-taking, mitigating statements, expressing stance, and creating cohesion. Their use facilitates the smooth flow of interaction, helps manage social relationships, and supports the conveyance of speaker intentions and attitudes. Despite their small size and lack of propositional content, discourse particles have a significant impact on conversational dynamics and are essential tools in effective communication. Understanding these particles' functions across different languages and cultural contexts further illuminates their role in human interaction, highlighting their centrality in discourse analysis.

2.3 The Relationship Between Context and the Analysis of Discourse Particles

Discourse particles—such as *well*, *so*, *you know*, and their equivalents in other languages—play crucial roles in managing interaction, signaling speaker intent, and structuring discourse (Schiffrin, 1987; Fraser, 1999). Their interpretation, however, is highly context-dependent. In this sense, context encompasses not only the immediate linguistic environment (co-text)

but also broader situational, social, and cognitive factors that shape communication (Duranti & Goodwin, 1992; Auer, 1996).

Without accounting for context, the multifunctional nature of discourse particles can be easily misunderstood or oversimplified (Blakemore, 2002). Therefore, any rigorous analysis of discourse particles must consider how meaning is constructed dynamically through contextual cues, including speaker relationships, conversational goals, sequential positioning, and cultural norms (Jucker & Ziv, 1998; Aijmer & Simon-Vandenberg, 2006).

Studies on the relationship between context and discourse particles have consistently shown that particles are context-sensitive elements that perform a wide range of pragmatic functions (Fischer, 2006). However, while many researchers have acknowledged the importance of context, there are limitations in how it has been integrated into analysis.

Aijmer (2013) argues that discourse particles like *well*, *you know*, and *I mean* derive their meaning from their position in discourse and the communicative situation. Context is crucial for understanding their pragmatic force, such as marking contrast, hesitation, or elaboration. Although Aijmer employs corpus data, her approach also incorporates introspective judgments, which can limit replicability and omit real-time processing elements.

Heritage and Sorjonen (1994), using Conversation Analysis (CA), demonstrate how particles like *yeah*, *oh*, and *so* index local sequential contexts, signaling agreement, surprise, or topic shift. These elements are interactionally consequential, assisting speakers in navigating alignment, epistemics, and topic management.

While CA is powerful in describing sequential structure, it exhibits several limitations. For instance, it often omits cognitive or psychological considerations—such as how discourse particles index mental states like uncertainty or surprise (Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 2006). Additionally, CA's focus on the immediate sequential context may under-theorize broader cultural and genre-specific influences (Arundale, 2010). Its findings, typically grounded in English and other Western languages, lack generalizability to non-Western linguistic contexts (Bolden, 2006). Moreover, CA sometimes neglects prosodic and multimodal features, which are crucial to interpreting particles like *oh* or *well* (Local, 1996). Furthermore, CA remains largely descriptive and lacks predictive capacity or integration with broader pragmatic theories (Levinson, 1983).

Blakemore (2002), working within Relevance Theory (Sperber & Wilson, 1995), proposes that discourse markers are procedural expressions guiding the hearer's interpretation. Unlike CA, which centers on surface-level sequential features, Blakemore's approach emphasizes inferential processing. For example, markers like *after all* constrain contextual assumptions and promote efficient comprehension by indicating cognitive relationships between utterances. While informative, critics argue that Relevance Theory can over-intellectualize communication, downplaying its social and emotional components (Ifantidou, 2001).

The current study seeks to integrate CA's focus on interactional detail with Relevance Theory's cognitive dimension, offering a holistic view of discourse particle use in Lutsotso interactions.

Fraser (2009) analyzes discourse markers from a semantic-pragmatic perspective, categorizing them by function: contrastive, elaborative, inferential, causal, and reformulation. He views these markers as metadiscursive elements that signal relationships

between utterances, echoing Blakemore's procedural perspective but offering more functional granularity. Fraser's typology highlights how discourse markers operate differently across spoken/written discourse, formal/informal registers, and discourse genres (Fraser, 1999, 2009). While valuable, his framework tends to treat markers as having relatively fixed meanings, overlooking their fluidity across different contexts.

Bolden (2006) investigates Russian discourse particles and demonstrates how their meaning is shaped by cultural norms, such as politeness and alignment. Her findings show that particles like *že* and *ved'* function in culturally specific ways—for example, expressing shared epistemic grounds or softening directives. These meanings are emergent from sociocultural expectations and cannot be generalized without considering the ethnographic context (Bolden, 2006; cf. Brown & Levinson, 1987; Heritage, 2012).

Bolden's work challenges universalist tendencies in pragmatics and underscores the need for context-sensitive models like the ethnography of speaking (Duranti & Goodwin, 1992). However, even her study raises questions about cross-linguistic applicability, given its language-specific focus. Additional limitations across the field include vague or inconsistent definitions of context, lack of multimodal analysis (e.g., gestures, gaze), and a static treatment of evolving discourse (Erman, 2001).

Overall, existing studies agree that context is fundamental to interpreting discourse particles. Nevertheless, significant methodological gaps remain, particularly regarding integration of cognitive, cultural, and interactional perspectives. This justifies the current study's approach to examining Lutsotso discourse particles through an integrated disco-pragmatic framework.

2.4 The Interrelatedness Between Relevance Theory and the Analysis of Discourse Particles

Relevance Theory (RT), proposed by Sperber and Wilson (1986/1995), is a cognitive-pragmatic framework explaining how hearers interpret utterances by inferring the speaker's intention based on cognitive effects and processing effort. Central to RT is the Principle of Relevance, which posits that humans automatically seek to maximize relevance—deriving the greatest contextual effect with the least cognitive effort (Sperber & Wilson, 1995).

The intersection between RT and discourse particle analysis has yielded rich insights into how these seemingly minor elements serve significant inferential and communicative functions. Discourse particles, within RT, are not treated as conveyors of propositional content but as procedural indicators—linguistic elements that guide hearers in interpreting utterances efficiently (Blakemore, 2002).

Blakemore (1987, 2002) was among the first to integrate discourse particles into RT. She demonstrated that particles such as *after all*, *so*, *but*, and *indeed* do not encode concepts in the traditional sense but provide procedural instructions to the hearer. These instructions aid in deriving implicatures and managing context. Her work provides a foundational distinction between conceptual and procedural meaning, emphasizing how discourse particles enhance processing efficiency (Blakemore, 2002). While her analysis is groundbreaking, it predominantly focuses on English, lacks cross-linguistic application, and does not fully address prosody, social indexicality, or the sequential positioning of particles in discourse.

Expanding RT's applicability to Japanese, Itani (1998) examined the particles *ne* and *yo* through a relevance-theoretic lens. He argued that these particles are procedural in nature,

shaping the hearer's interpretation by signaling speaker stance, alignment, and expected response. His work shows that although Japanese discourse particles lack direct English equivalents, they can be systematically analyzed using RT principles. Importantly, Itani (1998) connects procedural meaning to Japanese cultural norms, such as politeness and interpersonal harmony (*wa*), demonstrating the interplay between cognitive universality and linguistic specificity.

Despite these strengths, Itani's study is primarily theoretical. It overlooks how particles are used dynamically in natural conversation, especially in regard to emotion, formality, and gender. The lack of corpus-based validation and limited engagement with turn-taking and prosodic cues limits the empirical robustness of the analysis.

Escandell-Vidal (1998) applied RT to Spanish discourse connectives such as *pero* ("but"), *así que* ("so"), *pues* ("then/well"), and *o sea* ("that is"). She argued that these connectives encode procedural meaning, functioning not to add conceptual content but to guide inferential processes that contribute to discourse coherence. Her work illustrates how meaning arises from the interaction between connectives and context, aligning with RT's emphasis on relevance-driven comprehension (Escandell-Vidal, 1998).

Key contributions of Escandell-Vidal's work include demonstrating the inferential role of connectives in guiding interpretation and highlighting their procedural encoding. However, her analysis, like that of Blakemore and Itani, is largely theoretical. The high context-dependence of some Spanish particles challenges procedural categorization, and functional overlap among connectives remains difficult to resolve. Moreover, genre sensitivity and variation across registers are underexplored.

Wilson and Sperber (1993) elaborated on the role of procedural meaning in RT by emphasizing that discourse particles guide comprehension through inferential strategies rather than propositional encoding. According to them, particles contribute to utterance interpretation by prompting the retrieval of contextual assumptions and influencing the hearer's inferential path (Wilson & Sperber, 1993). While this model robustly accounts for particle functions at the level of individual utterances, it is less effective in capturing how such elements operate across extended discourse or within dialogic structures.

Hansen (2008) broadened the scope of RT by incorporating subjectivity and speaker stance into the analysis of discourse particles. Her study on French particles—such as *tu vois*, *quand même*, and *ben*—illustrated how these elements encode epistemic and attitudinal positioning. These particles help speakers negotiate common ground, indicate certainty or doubt, and signal intersubjectivity (Hansen, 2008). Under RT, she argues, procedural expressions are not merely tools for efficient communication but are also reflective of the speaker's stance toward shared knowledge.

Hansen's key contribution lies in demonstrating how procedural meaning encodes interpersonal and subjective functions, expanding RT's applicability beyond cognitive efficiency. However, her focus on subjectivity sometimes blurs the distinction between conceptual and procedural meaning, posing a theoretical tension within the RT framework.

Across these foundational studies, several critical gaps emerge. First is the monolingual bias, with English disproportionately represented, while African, creole, and indigenous languages remain underexplored (Escandell-Vidal, 2011). Secondly, most analyses are theory-driven and static, isolating utterances without considering how meaning unfolds dynamically in interaction. Relevance Theory's primary focus on individual utterances often

neglects real-time communicative cues such as prosody, gesture, and turn-taking structures (Stivers & Sidnell, 2005).

Moreover, RT lacks integration with interactional approaches such as Conversation Analysis (CA), which emphasize the sequential organization of talk and the relational work performed by discourse particles (Heritage & Sorjonen, 2018). The failure to engage multimodal and dynamic aspects of interaction limits RT's explanatory power in authentic communicative contexts.

To address these limitations, scholars have proposed integrating RT with CA and multimodal discourse analysis. For example, Escandell-Vidal (2011) and Bolden (2006) highlight the value of studying discourse particles within turn-by-turn interaction. Similarly, Stivers and Sidnell (2005) emphasize the importance of gesture, gaze, and prosody in constructing relevance and guiding interpretation.

The current study builds on these insights by analyzing discourse particles in Lutsotso, a Bantu language, through a combined relevance-theoretic and interactional lens. This hybrid approach captures both the cognitive-pragmatic and socio-interactional functions of discourse particles, situating them within real-time, multimodal communication.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework provides a foundational lens through which the research problem is conceptualized and explored. It comprises established theories, models, and concepts that offer insights into explaining, predicting, or understanding the phenomena under investigation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The selection of an appropriate theoretical

framework is critical, as it anchors the study within a scholarly tradition, ensuring alignment among the research questions, methodology, data analysis, and overall interpretive approach.

Given the interdisciplinary nature of the current study, three theoretical frameworks are employed: Relevance Theory (Sperber & Wilson, 1995), Conversation Analysis (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974), and Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969). These frameworks are used to analyze contextual discourse particles in Lutsotso interactions from a disco-pragmatic perspective. Each framework contributes a distinct analytical lens: Relevance Theory focuses on cognitive inference and how listeners derive meaning based on optimal relevance; Conversation Analysis examines the sequential organization of talk and interactional turn-taking; and Speech Act Theory addresses the performative functions of language in communication, such as making requests, promises, or assertions.

By grounding the study in these theoretical perspectives, the researcher can interpret discourse particles systematically and contribute to broader academic discussions on pragmatics and discourse analysis. The following section introduces each theory, outlining its origin, major proponents, core principles, and relevance to the current study's objectives.

2.5.1 Relevance Theory (RT)

2.5.1.1 Origin of Relevance Theory

Relevance Theory (RT) was formulated in the 1980s by Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson as a cognitive-pragmatic framework aimed at explaining how individuals interpret meaning in communication through inference rather than solely through linguistic coding. The theory was conceived as a refinement and, in some respects, a critique of Grice's (1975)

Cooperative Principle, which, while foundational, did not fully account for the cognitive mechanisms involved in utterance comprehension.

In their influential work *Relevance: Communication and Cognition* (Sperber & Wilson, 1986/1995), the authors situated their theory within the broader fields of cognitive science and communication theory. Rather than viewing communication as merely the transmission of coded messages, RT posits that listeners derive meaning by inferring the speaker's intention based on the principle of relevance—that is, the expectation that every utterance will yield adequate cognitive effects for minimal processing effort. This shift from code-based to inference-based understanding marked a significant development in pragmatic theory, offering a more psychologically grounded explanation of how meaning is constructed in interaction.

2.5.1.2 Proponents of Relevance Theory

Dan Sperber is a French cognitive anthropologist and philosopher widely recognized for his interdisciplinary work spanning anthropology, linguistics, philosophy, and cognitive science. Initially trained in social anthropology, Sperber became a central figure in cognitive pragmatics, particularly through his collaboration with British linguist and philosopher Deirdre Wilson. Together, they co-developed Relevance Theory (RT), first introduced in their seminal publication *Relevance: Communication and Cognition* (Sperber & Wilson, 1986/1995), which marked a significant departure from Gricean approaches to pragmatics by foregrounding the role of inferential reasoning in communication.

Sperber and Wilson's RT proposed that human communication is governed by the search for optimal relevance, defined as the balance between cognitive effects and processing effort.

In contrast to the code model of communication, RT emphasized that listeners interpret utterances by inferring the speaker's intentions, guided by expectations of relevance (Sperber & Wilson, 1995). This theoretical shift redefined implicature, contextual inference, and the nature of speaker-hearer cooperation within cognitive frameworks.

Beyond his contributions to pragmatics, Sperber advanced theories about the modularity of cognition, arguing that the human mind operates via specialized modules dedicated to functions such as communication, inference, and cultural transmission (Sperber, 2005). One of his notable contributions in this domain is the concept of epistemic vigilance, which refers to cognitive mechanisms humans use to evaluate the reliability of communicated information (Sperber et al., 2010). This concept has become increasingly influential in understanding how listeners assess speaker credibility and the epistemic value of utterances.

From an anthropological perspective, Sperber proposed the "epidemiology of representations," an approach that likens the spread of cultural ideas to the transmission of viruses. According to this view, cultural representations propagate not simply through imitation but through selective retention and transformation shaped by inferential and communicative processes (Sperber, 1996). This theory bridges cognitive science and cultural studies, offering a novel perspective on the interaction between cognition, communication, and cultural evolution.

Sperber's intellectual legacy is characterized by his commitment to cognitive realism—the idea that mental structures both constrain and enable communication—and by his interdisciplinary influence across pragmatics, linguistics, anthropology, philosophy, and psychology. RT remains a foundational theory in pragmatics and has inspired numerous

applications, including discourse marker analysis (Blakemore, 2002), meta-representation (Carston, 2002), and the study of contextualization in discourse (Wilson & Sperber, 2004).

Deirdre Wilson, co-architect of Relevance Theory, has significantly influenced how scholars understand communication, cognition, and meaning. Wilson and Sperber (1995) proposed that communication is not merely the transmission of information but the generation of cognitive effects within the listener's mental context. Central to this theory is the Cognitive Principle of Relevance, which posits that human cognition tends to be geared toward maximizing relevance, and the Communicative Principle of Relevance, which suggests that every utterance conveys a presumption of its own optimal relevance (Wilson & Sperber, 2004).

Wilson emphasizes that meaning is not passively received but actively constructed through inferential processes. Listeners interpret utterances by selecting the most relevant context and applying inferential strategies to recover speaker intention, balancing informativeness with cognitive efficiency. This pragmatic model has had a profound impact on how utterance meaning, implicature, and contextual effects are understood in linguistics and cognitive science (Wilson & Sperber, 2012).

Diane Blakemore has played a crucial role in applying Relevance Theory to the study of discourse markers and procedural meaning. In her works, particularly *Relevance and Linguistic Meaning* (Blakemore, 2002) and later writings (e.g., Blakemore, 2011), she demonstrates how discourse markers—such as *but*, *so*, and *after all*—do not encode conceptual content but rather procedural constraints on interpretation. These expressions help guide the hearer's inferential processes by indicating how an utterance should be contextually integrated.

Blakemore's (2002, 2011) research has shown that discourse markers function as cognitive cues that direct the hearer's expectations and attention, leading to more efficient processing of discourse. Her application of RT to discourse analysis reveals how linguistic elements can influence the inferential trajectory of interpretation, highlighting the interface between linguistic form and cognitive function.

Her work on procedural meaning—that is, meaning derived from instructions on how to process information, rather than the content itself—has deepened our understanding of how language structures communication beyond lexical semantics. By incorporating RT, Blakemore has shown how discourse coherence and efficiency are achieved through subtle pragmatic mechanisms, which has further advanced the application of inferential pragmatics to real-world language use.

2.5.1.3 Theoretical Perspectives on Relevance Theory and Discourse Particles

Relevance Theory (RT), proposed by Sperber and Wilson (1986), emerged from the intersection of cognition and communication. It was designed to improve upon Grice's (1975) model of implicature by grounding communication in cognitive principles. The core assumption of RT is that human cognition aims to maximize relevance, i.e., individuals are predisposed to derive the greatest cognitive effect for the least processing effort (Sperber & Wilson, 1995, 2002).

In line with this, language users attend to information that yields the highest relevance, which allows them to optimize understanding in communication. Discourse particles are instrumental in this process; they serve as linguistic tools to aid in achieving relevance by

guiding the interpretation of utterances (Qian, 2021). These particles help listeners infer speaker intentions more efficiently by reducing the processing burden and clarifying contextual cues.

Blakemore (1987, 2002), applying Relevance Theory, emphasized that discourse particles function primarily to aid comprehension. They do so by drawing attention to relevant contextual assumptions and constraining the hearer's inferential path. As such, discourse particles are not mere fillers but pragmatic markers that influence the direction and depth of processing, thereby enhancing communication efficiency.

Discourse, as a structured exchange of utterances, is composed of various speech acts (Edmondson, 1981). Each element, including discourse particles, contributes to the illocutionary force of an utterance—meaning it plays a role in the intent and function of speech (Makuto, 2009). Schourup (1983) highlighted that these particles allow speakers to project their cognitive processes and signal shifts in thought, thus managing the interactional flow and enabling interlocutors to anticipate or adjust responses accordingly.

Discourse particles also serve textual and interpersonal functions. Textually, they contribute to cohesion by marking topic shifts, maintaining continuity, and signaling returns to previous topics. Interpersonally, they express speaker attitudes, manage face needs, and regulate the relationship between speaker and listener (Fraser, 1999; Schiffrin, 1987).

In analyzing Lutsotso discourse particles, their pragmatic functions are best understood through Relevance Theory, particularly its two core principles: The Cognitive Principle and the Communicative Principle (Sperber & Wilson, 1995, 2002).

2.5.1.3.1 Cognitive Principle of Relevance

The Cognitive Principle of Relevance posits that human cognition is oriented toward maximizing relevance, defined as achieving the highest cognitive effect with the least processing effort (Sperber & Wilson, 1995). This principle underlies human attention, memory, and inferencing, prioritizing information that is likely to lead to new insights, revised beliefs, or contextual resolution.

According to Sperber and Wilson (1995), relevance is judged based on cognitive effects—such as drawing inferences or resolving ambiguities—and mental effort. Listeners expect utterances to be worth processing and informative. Consequently, speakers are motivated to produce contributions that fulfill these expectations.

Discourse particles such as "well," "you know," and "after all" help manage the inferential load by highlighting specific assumptions or guiding hearers to the most relevant interpretation (Blakemore, 2002). This aligns with findings in cognitive psychology, where humans are seen as “cognitive misers,” preferring efficient strategies for information processing (Fiske & Taylor, 1991).

2.5.1.3.2 Communicative Principle of Relevance

The Communicative Principle of Relevance extends RT to communication specifically. It states that every ostensive (intentional) communicative act conveys a presumption of its own optimal relevance—that it will produce adequate cognitive effects with minimal processing effort (Sperber & Wilson, 1995).

This principle incorporates ostensive-inferential communication, in which the speaker provides evidence of communicative intent, and the hearer infers both that the speaker is communicating and what they intend to communicate. Acts such as direct eye contact,

deictic gestures, and discourse particles support this by guiding the hearer's inferential processes.

For example, discourse markers such as "but," "so," or "well" are not arbitrarily placed but serve to direct listeners to process an utterance in a particular way, often highlighting contrast, consequence, or hesitation (Blakemore, 2002). These markers serve as cues that help listeners infer non-literal or context-dependent meanings, especially in cases of irony, politeness, or pragmatic implicature.

2.5.1.3.3 Inferential Communication

RT is rooted in the model of inferential communication, which contrasts with the traditional code model (Shannon & Weaver, 1949). In the code model, communication is a matter of encoding and decoding messages. In inferential communication, by contrast, the speaker produces evidence of intent, and the hearer infers that intention based on context and relevance (Sperber & Wilson, 1995).

Two types of intentions are recognized: informative intention (to share information) and communicative intention (to signal that the speaker wants the hearer to recognize the informative intention). Effective communication requires that both intentions be recognized.

Discourse particles play a role in managing this inferential process by directing attention to relevant contextual assumptions. RT assumes that hearers, driven by relevance, will seek the most informative and least effortful interpretation (Sperber & Wilson, 1995). As such, discourse particles contribute to efficiency by narrowing interpretive options and flagging pragmatic cues.

2.5.1.3.4 Explicature and Implicature

RT distinguishes between explicatures and implicatures, two inferential levels of communicated meaning (Sperber & Wilson, 1986/1995; Carston, 2002). An explicature is the explicitly communicated meaning that still requires contextual enrichment to resolve ambiguities or fill in gaps. For example, resolving pronouns or ellipses often involves constructing explicatures from incomplete logical forms (Carston, 2002). An implicature, on the other hand, is not directly encoded but inferred based on relevance and shared assumptions. Implicatures may be strong (clearly intended) or weak (open to interpretation), depending on context and cognitive effects (Sperber & Wilson, 1995).

Discourse particles contribute to both levels by offering procedural cues about how to derive either explicatures or implicatures, especially in managing tone, stance, and speaker intentions.

2.5.1.3.5 Procedural Meaning

Procedural meaning, a concept elaborated by Blakemore (2002) and Hansen (2008), refers to linguistic elements that encode instructions for processing utterances, rather than contributing conceptual content. Unlike conceptual expressions (e.g., “dog,” “run”), procedural expressions guide how utterances should be interpreted, helping listeners access relevant contextual assumptions efficiently.

According to Sperber and Wilson (1995), procedural meaning is crucial for achieving relevance because it reduces cognitive load. Discourse particles, as procedural expressions, aid interpretation by managing discourse structure and reducing ambiguity. For example,

"so" may indicate a conclusion, while "well" signals a shift or hesitation, both directing inference in specific ways.

Blakemore (2002) emphasizes that such particles do not encode concepts but offer processing instructions. Their use enhances the inferential process by constraining possible interpretations, thus promoting efficiency in comprehension and reinforcing the relevance-driven nature of human communication

2.5.1.4 Emancipatory Concepts in Relevance Theory

Although Relevance Theory (RT) was not originally formulated as a critical or emancipatory theory, it possesses emancipatory potential when embedded within a discourse-pragmatic framework. This section explores how RT supports such a potential through its treatment of communication, interpretation, and indigenous pragmatic competence.

2.5.1.4.1 Valorization of Inferential Communication

A central feature of Relevance Theory, developed by Sperber and Wilson (1986, 1995), is its emphasis on inferential communication. In this model, communication is not achieved by straightforward encoding and decoding of meaning, but rather through the provision of ostensive stimuli by the speaker, which the hearer interprets inferentially. This approach diverges from the code model, wherein language is assumed to contain fully encoded meaning (Sperber & Wilson, 1995).

RT valorizes inferential communication in two major ways. First, it presents inference as the core mechanism of human communication. All ostensive-inferential communication relies on the hearer's ability to extract meaning from contextual clues rather than linguistic form alone. Second, it prioritizes cognitive effects over syntactic or semantic form, which

reframes communication as a cognitive process shaped by relevance—defined as the balance between cognitive benefits and processing effort (Wilson & Sperber, 2004).

Blakemore (2002) elaborates on this by demonstrating how meaning emerges from contextual enrichment, implicatures, and assumptions. According to the Cognitive Principle of Relevance, humans are predisposed to attend to information likely to yield cognitive benefits with minimal effort. This principle positions inferential communication as an efficient and adaptive cognitive strategy rather than a peripheral aspect of communication.

Moreover, RT critiques traditional models such as Grice's Cooperative Principle for their over-reliance on overt linguistic form (Grice, 1975). Instead, it explains how non-verbal elements, discourse particles, and contextual interpretations are integral to communication. Blakemore (2002) illustrates this through the analysis of discourse markers, which she argues serve procedural rather than conceptual functions. For instance, discourse particles can indicate a justificatory relationship, prompting the hearer to infer that one proposition supports another.

Blakemore also emphasizes the dynamic nature of interpretation, wherein each communicative act invites the hearer to derive meaning by assessing relevance. This includes recognizing both informative and communicative intentions through ostensive cues. Such cues may extend beyond verbal language to include tone, gesture, and even silence—thus allowing for cross-linguistic and multimodal relevance (Wilson & Sperber, 2012).

This reconceptualization of communication as inferential rather than purely linguistic has far-reaching implications. It not only advances understanding of pragmatics and discourse but also affirms the communicative richness of languages and practices previously deemed

marginal. For instance, RT challenges linguistic hierarchies that portray African languages like Lutsotso as deficient, by revealing their inferential complexity.

2.5.1.4.2 Empowerment Through Interpretation

Relevance Theory also contributes to emancipatory analysis through its emphasis on hearer agency. Sperber and Wilson (1986/1995) argue that communication involves the hearer actively constructing meaning by drawing on contextual assumptions. Success in communication arises not from perfect transmission but from the hearer's ability to select the most relevant interpretation—one that maximizes cognitive benefits and minimizes effort.

This orientation empowers hearers by positioning them as co-constructors of meaning. Interpretation, therefore, becomes an act of agency, particularly salient in contexts where power dynamics influence meaning-making. In multilingual, multicultural, or postcolonial contexts, individuals and communities often reinterpret discourse using their own inferential strategies rooted in local knowledge and ideologies.

For instance, marginalized hearers may reinterpret political speech, identify euphemisms, or challenge dominant meanings through irony, silence, or questioning. Such strategies represent a form of discursive resistance, where power is exercised not through speaking alone but through interpreting (Blommaert, 2005).

In grassroots and indigenous settings, communication frequently involves the negotiation of meaning. Listeners draw upon shared cultural histories and social schemas to reinterpret discourse in contextually appropriate ways. This interpretive flexibility allows for the

reframing of authoritative messages in ways that challenge or resist hegemonic narratives (Mey, 2001).

Blommaert (2005) stresses that language users interpret discourse based on unequal access to linguistic and symbolic resources. RT's emphasis on inferential reasoning complements this view by showing how even marginalized listeners can derive subversive meanings from limited inputs. In the context of Lutsotso, for example, community members may respond to political discourse through irony or withholding feedback—subtle forms of critique enabled by inferential competence.

The concept of “Empowerment through Interpretation” thus highlights how meaning is negotiated rather than passively received. RT supports this by acknowledging the hearer's inferential agency, providing a useful lens for analyzing how meaning is shaped, resisted, and transformed in socially and politically charged contexts.

2.5.1.4.3 Recognition of Indigenous Pragmatic Competence

Relevance Theory also facilitates the recognition and validation of indigenous pragmatic competence, especially in understudied languages like Lutsotso. Historically, discourse particles in African languages have been dismissed as fillers or lacking semantic value. However, RT repositions them as cognitively meaningful, procedural tools that shape interpretation in discourse.

2.5.1.4.3.1 Cognitive Sophistication Behind Discourse Particles

RT holds that utterance interpretation depends on inferential reasoning informed by context (Sperber & Wilson, 1995). Discourse particles, though minimal in syntactic content, play a vital role in managing relevance, marking shifts in speaker stance, or signaling agreement or hesitation.

In Lutsotso, particles like *ewe*, *kale*, and *nga* can mark subtle shifts in tone, indicate alignment, or cue the hearer to infer shared assumptions. These communicative acts demonstrate speakers' awareness of both shared knowledge and contextual expectations—indicating sophisticated pragmatic competence (Itani, 1998; Nuyts, 2001).

2.5.1.4.3.2 Culturally Specific Inferential Strategies

RT enables the analysis of localized inferential strategies that reflect unique sociocultural knowledge systems. In Lutsotso, speakers may use indirectness, repetition, or culturally embedded expressions to generate implicatures. Such strategies reflect local epistemologies and should not be interpreted through Western linguistic frameworks alone (Mey, 2001; Blommaert, 2005).

For example, a particle may not assert a proposition directly but may index social hierarchy, emotional nuance, or deference—all depending on shared contextual knowledge. These uses, though subtle, are deeply embedded in culturally specific interactional norms and highlight the inferential capacities of speakers.

2.5.1.4.3.3 Empowerment Through Recognition

Applying RT to the study of Lutsotso discourse validates indigenous forms of expression as cognitively rich and pragmatically nuanced. It challenges the deficit view of African

languages and demonstrates that their communicative systems are governed by sophisticated rules and shared expectations.

By foregrounding procedural meaning and hearer inference, RT becomes not only a descriptive tool but also an emancipatory framework. It affirms that African speakers are not linguistically lacking but are deploying context-sensitive, cognitively demanding strategies to achieve communicative goals (Blakemore, 2002; Wilson & Sperber, 2012). This shift helps redress linguistic marginalization and opens space for inclusive, culturally grounded analysis.

2.5.1.5. Relevance of Relevance Theory to the Study of Discourse Particles in Lutsotso Interactions

Drawing from Blakemore (2002), Lutsotso discourse particles can be viewed as procedural indicators — they guide the hearer in interpreting the relevance of an utterance, signaling relationships like justification, contrast, or epistemic stance. For instance, a particle might: Indicate confirmation or alignment with prior information, signal contrast or correction, and highlight emphasis, stance, or shared assumptions. Rather than relying solely on syntax, Lutsotso speakers often depend on context, shared cultural norms, and inferencing to interpret meaning. RT helps account for how listeners retrieve contextual assumptions, determine speaker intentions, and use discourse particles to narrow interpretive paths (i.e., reduce ambiguity).

When combined with discourse analysis, RT provides a cognitively informed model of how interactional cues (like particles) work within Lutsotso conversational norms. For instance, particles may mark turn boundaries, indicate relational alignment (e.g., respect, solidarity),

and manage information flow in narrative and argument structure. Using RT to analyze discourse particles affirms the sophistication of Lutsotso pragmatic competence, challenging linguistically colonial assumptions and offering empirical tools for linguistic documentation and revitalization.

Relevance Theory offers a powerful inferential and cognitive framework for understanding how meaning is constructed in real-time interaction. When applied to the study of Lutsotso discourse particles within a disco-pragmatic lens, RT explains the functional logic behind particle use, highlights culturally grounded inferencing strategies, affirms the pragmatic richness of African languages, and supports decolonial linguistic inquiry through context-sensitive, cognitive-pragmatic analysis.

A disco-pragmatic application of RT involves Analyzing how discourse particles guide interpretation and interactional coherence, investigating their socio-pragmatic functions in context-rich, culturally situated conversations, recognizing the local communicative logic and cultural interactional norms in Lutsotso talk, and revealing the dialogic construction of meaning through particle use.

The disco-pragmatic framework emerges from the integration of discourse analysis and pragmatics, tracing its roots to speech act theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969), Grice's Cooperative Principle (Grice, 1975), and the ethnomethodological insights of Conversation Analysis (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974). As a hybrid field, it emphasizes both the form and function of language in use, especially in naturally occurring social contexts. Over time, the approach evolved to include critical and contextual dimensions, recognizing that discourse is both a reflective and constitutive force of social realities (Fairclough, 1992; van Dijk, 1997).

2.5.2 Conversational Analysis (CA)

Conversation Analysis (CA) is a qualitative research approach focused on the detailed, systematic study of talk-in-interaction—how people use language and other communicative resources in real-time conversations. Originating in sociology, CA is widely used in linguistics, communication studies, and pragmatics.

2.5.2.2 Origin and Development of Conversation Analysis (CA)

Conversation Analysis (CA) emerged as a systematic approach to studying talk-in-interaction in the late 1960s and early 1970s, primarily in the field of sociology. It focuses on the structure, organization, and sequential patterns of everyday spoken interaction.

CA traces its intellectual roots to ethnomethodology, a sociological perspective pioneered by Harold Garfinkel in the 1960s. Perera (2024) states that ethnomethodology is the study of the methods people use to make sense of their social world. This means that it is a theory that adopts sociological approach that seeks to understand the social order and rules that structure everyday life, analyzing the common sense methods people use to make sense of and function in their daily lives. Garfinkel emphasized the indexical, situated, and context-bound nature of meaning in everyday talk.

Harvey Sacks – founding father of CA- a student of Garfinkel, is widely regarded as the founder of CA. His lectures in the late 1960s (later compiled in *Lectures on Conversation*, 1992) marked the beginning of CA as a distinct field. Sacks, along with Emanuel Schegloff and Gail Jefferson, developed the analytic tools and transcription methods that remain central to CA today.

2.5.2.3 Core Assumptions and Principles of Early CA

2.5.2.3.1 Talk is orderly

The core assumption “**Talk is orderly**” lies at the heart of early Conversation Analysis (CA), a sociological and linguistic approach developed in the late 1960s and early 1970s, primarily by Harvey Sacks, along with Emanuel Schegloff and Gail Jefferson. This assumption is foundational to the methodology and interpretive lens of CA.

Everyday conversation is not chaotic or random; rather, it is highly organized and structured. This order is not imposed externally but is produced and maintained by participants in the talk through shared norms, turn-taking mechanisms, and repair strategies. This implies that meaning should come out clearly. CA holds that ordinary conversation follows an implicit system with rules and patterns. For example, turn-taking in conversation (who speaks when) is not arbitrary. Participants orient themselves to expected sequences (e.g., questions typically expect answers, greetings elicit return greetings).

2.5.2.3.2 Talk is Locally Managed

“Locally managed” in the context of conversations means that the participants in the conversation control the direction and pace of the dialogue, rather than having a predetermined structure or external authority dictating the flow (Anderson, 2010). It emphasizes the interactive and dynamic nature of conversation where each participant’s contribution influences the subsequent exchange.

Conversation is context-sensitive and emergent, meaning that participants continuously shape the conversation in response to what has just been said. There is no need for external regulation; participants themselves coordinate and monitor the orderliness of the talk. For instance, a pause after a question signals the expectation of a response, and its absence can

prompt the speaker to repeat or rephrase. Anderson (2007) argues that in a locally managed conversation, the participants themselves decide what topics to discuss, how long to spend on each topic, and how to transition between them. There is no pre-set agenda or script dictating the conversation's path. This means that the participants are ones in control.

In addition to that, this notion means that a conversation is dynamic and interactive. This means that the conversation is constantly evolving based on the contributions of all involved. What one says influences what the next person says, creating a dynamic back-and-forth. Lastly, Anderson (2010) argues that conversation is not linear. Unlike a linear presentation, a conversation is not a one-way flow of information. It involves interruptions, tangents, and shifts in direction, all managed by the participants in real-time.

2.5.2.3.3 Talk is Recipient-Designed

Depperman (2019), states that recipient-design in conversation analysis refers to how speakers tailor their talk to the specific knowledge, understanding, and perspective of their audience. This adaptation is not just about making things clear, but also about acknowledging and responding to the individual characteristics of the listener. Speakers design their utterances with consideration of the recipient's knowledge, role, and expectations. This ensures mutual intelligibility and contributes to the smooth flow and structure of conversation.

In recipient-design, there is an element of tailoring the message. This involves adjusting the content, content, language, and delivery of speech to suit the particular recipient(s). speakers shape their utterances in real-time to fit the knowledge, needs, expectations, and roles of their conversational partners. Speakers strategically adapt their speech with consideration

for the identity, knowledge, social role, and relationship of the listener. It is not merely about the message itself, but how the message is crafted for the intended audience within a specific interactional context (Depperman,2019).

Blokpoe (2012) posits that tailoring the message involves content-where speakers select what information to include or omit based on what they believe the listener already knows or needs to know. For instance, a speaker may provide more background when talking to a stranger than to a close friend. It also involves language. This is where word choice, level of formality, technicality, and even dialect or code-switching can vary depending on the recipient. A person may use technical terms with a colleague but simplify language when speaking to a layperson. Additionally, it involves delivery. This includes intonation, pace, emphasis, gestures, and eye contact. Speakers adjust these features to align with the listener's attentiveness, emotional state, or cultural expectations.

Recipient design serves several pragmatic and interactional purposes. First of all, it ensures mutual understanding (common ground). Secondly it signals respect, politeness, or solidarity. To add on that, it also manages turn-taking and conversational flow, and finally, it facilitates cooperation and minimizes miscommunication. In essence, recipient design highlights the dynamic and collaborative nature of conversation, where speakers actively shape their communication based on their understanding of the recipient.

Albert (2013), observed that in CA, recipient design reflects the view that talk is not autonomous or scripted — it is fundamentally collaborative and responsive. It underscores that communication is *context-sensitive*, and speakers are constantly monitoring and modifying their language based on recipient feedback, cues, and assumptions. Recipient design embodies the dynamic, interactive nature of communication. The speaker actively

considers and adapts to the audience, tailoring the content, language, and delivery of their message to align with the recipient's characteristics and needs. This adjustment is key to achieving mutual understanding and effective interaction.

2.5.2.3.4 Sequential Organization

In conversation analysis (CA), sequential organization refers to the way turns-at-talk are ordered and combined to accomplish actions in conversation. It examines how utterances are positioned in relation to each other to create coherent sequences of interaction. A core concept is the adjacency pair, which consists of a first pair part (e.g., a question) and a second pair part (e.g., an answer). These pairs can be expanded with pre-sequences, insert-sequences, and post-expansions, creating more complex structures.

In essence, sequential organization in CA is a way of analyzing how talk is structured to create meaningful and understandable interactions. It highlights the dynamic and organized nature of conversation, where each turn is not only a response to the past but also a preparation for the future of the interaction. Meaning in talk is often derived not from single utterances but from sequences of actions (e.g., question–answer, offer–acceptance/rejection). The analysis of adjacency pairs (like greeting–greeting, invitation–response) reveals a systematic order in how conversations unfold.

These sequences demonstrate that talk progresses in predictable and normative ways. This means that ordinary talk is not random or chaotic, but rather structured and orderly, governed by social norms and expectations. Everyday talk follows systematic, rule-governed patterns rather than unfolding in a random or chaotic manner.

In human interaction, utterances are organized into sequential patterns — for example, greetings, question-answer pairs, requests and responses, or adjacency pairs (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973). These are not just habitual; they are socially expected forms of interaction. For instance, a greeting typically elicits a return greeting (“Hi” → “Hi”). These patterns make interaction predictable, allowing participants to anticipate what kind of response will follow a given utterance. Not only are these patterns predictable, but they are also normative, meaning there are social expectations about how to act appropriately in talk. Conversational norms guide things like turn-taking, repairing misunderstandings, and topic management.

This normativity is socially enforced — for example, silence after a question can be interpreted as awkwardness, resistance, or non-cooperation. Thus, ordinary conversation is not a free-for-all. It is structured, with participants oriented toward making sense, being understood, and coordinating their actions. The "orderliness" of talk comes not from external rules but from participants' shared understandings of what counts as appropriate at each moment.

Examples from CA research reveal that in turn-taking (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974), people know when to speak, when to wait, and how to signal that they want a turn, and in repair sequences, people use predictable formats to fix problems in speaking, hearing, or understanding. Preference organization on the other hand, reveals that agreements are often delivered quickly and without hesitation, while disagreements are delayed or softened — again, demonstrating normative expectations.

Talk progresses in predictable and normative ways because it is structured around recognizable sequences, there are social norms guiding appropriate responses, participants rely on shared conventions to interpret and manage interaction, and these patterns allow for

mutual understanding and social coordination. Far from being chaotic, conversation is a highly organized activity, reflecting the social order and cultural expectations of its participants.

2.5.2.3. 5 Repair Mechanisms Maintain Order

Petite (2004), posits that in contrastive analysis (CA) — particularly when comparing the structures and patterns of interaction across different languages or cultures — the notion that "repair mechanisms maintain order" becomes a crucial focal point. Repair refers to the practices through which speakers address and resolve problems in speaking, hearing, or understanding during interaction. These mechanisms are *not arbitrary* — they follow normative patterns, such as self-initiated self-repair, other-initiated self-repair, and other-initiated other-repair.

In CA, repair mechanisms ensure the smooth progression of talk by maintaining mutual understanding and coherence. In Conversation Analysis (CA), repair mechanisms are the practices that speakers use to identify and resolve problems in speaking, hearing, or understanding during interaction. These mechanisms are crucial because they ensure the smooth progression of talk by helping participants maintain mutual understanding and coherence (Khalid, 2023).

Talk-in-interaction is based on the assumption that all participants are working toward a shared understanding. When something is misheard, misunderstood, or misspoken, repair mechanisms allow speakers to quickly fix the issue. This keeps the interaction intelligible and ensures that all participants are "on the same page." There is a mutual understanding.

Repair maintains interactional coherence by correcting errors, clarifying ambiguity, or rephrasing unclear talk. This keeps the conversation logically connected and aligned with participants' expectations. Coherence refers not just to grammar or logic, but to how well each turn fits into the unfolding sequence. When a repair is done, it reestablishes that fit.

Meadan (2004) categorizes repair (according to CA) in two ways, namely: self-initiated self-repair. Here, the speaker notices and corrects their own mistake. There is other-initiated self-repair whereby another speaker prompts the original speaker to fix the trouble.

Repair mechanisms show that conversation is not random, but normatively organized. There are preferred ways of fixing problems that reflect social norms of cooperation, politeness, and accountability. These practices support the CA principle that talk is orderly and structured. Repair mechanisms in CA act as self-regulating tools that keep conversation on track by managing breakdowns in communication. They reflect speakers' orientation toward mutual understanding and provide insight into how people collaboratively sustain meaningful interaction. Across languages, while the exact forms may differ, repair as a practice is universal and signals the speakers' shared orientation to the *orderliness* and *accountability* of talk.

In contrastive conversation analysis, scholars explore how different languages or speech communities structure repair. While the underlying function — maintaining interactional order — remains consistent, the strategies and preferences for repair vary. Some languages or cultures emphasize face-saving strategies, showing a strong preference for self-repair, which minimizes direct confrontation. For instance, Japanese speakers often engage in subtle self-repairs to maintain social harmony (see Hayashi, 2005).

In contrast, speakers of other languages might tolerate or even prefer more direct other-initiated repair, which can be more confrontational but efficient. In Western contexts (e.g., American English), overt repairs may be more acceptable, even humorous or pedagogical. In African or Indigenous speech communities, repair may be delayed, indirect, or embedded in storytelling, reflecting different norms around interruption and correction.

In sum, repair mechanisms maintain order by restoring understanding and keeping interaction on track — a universal function across languages. However, contrastive analysis reveals how the *forms, frequencies, and cultural meanings* of repair differ, highlighting the nuanced ways different linguistic communities achieve conversational order. These differences are not mere linguistic curiosities — they reflect broader social norms and communicative values that are essential for mutual understanding in multilingual and multicultural contexts.

Participants constantly work to repair breakdowns in communication—mishearings, misunderstandings, slips of the tongue—thus maintaining the coherence and orderliness of the interaction. Repair can be self-initiated or other-initiated, reflecting participants' commitment to preserving mutual understanding.

2.5.2.3.6 No Need for Psychological or Sociological Assumptions

Early CA avoids attributing order to internal mental states or broader social structures. Instead, it focuses on observable interactional practices and empirical data (typically audio-recorded natural conversations). Early Conversation Analysis (CA), developed by Harvey Sacks, Emanuel Schegloff, and Gail Jefferson in the 1960s and 1970s, takes a distinctive approach to studying human communication. One of its core methodological and theoretical

commitments is to avoid explaining the organization of talk by referencing internal mental states (such as intentions, beliefs, or emotions) or broader social structures (like class, gender roles, or institutional power). Instead, it focuses squarely on what is observably done in interaction, using empirical data, usually in the form of audio- or video-recorded natural conversations.

Early CA does not assume that the orderliness of conversation can be reduced to cognitive processes (like thought patterns) or macro-sociological structures (such as economic class or cultural norms). Instead of inferring what participants *think* or how *social forces* influence them, CA examines what participants actually *do* in interaction. The emphasis is on sequential organization—how turns at talk are managed, how speakers repair misunderstandings, how openings and closings occur, and how topics shift. These practices are seen as methods that participants themselves use to make sense of and produce orderly talk.

CA insists on grounding its analysis in actual data—recordings of spontaneous, naturally occurring conversations, rather than interviews, scripted interactions, or laboratory settings. Analysts transcribe these interactions in fine detail (often using Jeffersonian transcription) and examine them closely to uncover recurring patterns. Analysts study how participants themselves display their understanding of the unfolding interaction. For example, if a speaker produces a repair (e.g., “What do you mean?” or a self-correction), it shows how they interpret the prior utterance—not how an outside observer might interpret it.

Drawing from ethnomethodology, CA holds that order is produced moment-by-moment by participants using shared methods. The social order is not imposed from above; it is an achievement that emerges in interaction. Early CA resists speculative interpretations based

on psychological or sociological frameworks. It champions a data-driven, interaction-centered approach that treats the structure of talk as emergent, discoverable through careful analysis of what participants do and how they coordinate their actions in real time. This makes CA a powerful tool for uncovering the fine-grained mechanics of everyday communication. Early CA's assertion that "talk is orderly" is more than a description—it's a theoretical commitment. It suggests that conversational interaction is rule-governed, sequentially structured, locally managed, and oriented to by participants themselves. This orderliness is observable and analyzable without recourse to psychological states or abstract social categories, making CA a rigorously empirical and participant-centered approach.

Conversation is not chaotic but follows systematic, analyzable patterns. First, participants are co-constructors of meaning, i.e., meaning is negotiated in real-time between speakers. Secondly, sequential organization i.e., every utterance is context-sensitive and context-renewing (e.g., adjacency pairs like question–answer, greeting–greeting). In addition to that, there is also turn-taking system. Turn-taking is managed locally by participants using subtle linguistic cues. Finally, there is repair mechanisms whereby speakers self-monitor and correct misunderstandings or errors in real-time.

2.5.2 Relevance of Conversation Analysis in Examining Contextual Discourse Particles in Lutsotso Interactions

The relevance of Conversation Analysis (CA) to the study of discourse particles in Lutsotso interactions—especially through a disco-pragmatic lens—lies in its empirical attention to the sequential, interactional, and context-sensitive structure of talk. CA, which emerged from the work of Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974), provides analytic tools for uncovering how meaning is co-constructed in real-time conversation. When integrated with

discourse pragmatics, CA offers a rich methodological and theoretical framework for examining how discourse particles are employed to manage turn-taking, convey stance, and facilitate mutual understanding between speakers and listeners (Heritage, 1984; Schegloff, 2007).

One of the core strengths of CA is its reliance on naturally occurring spoken data, often collected through audio or video recordings. This facilitates close analysis of actual instances of Lutsotso discourse particle use in specific interactional contexts. It allows for the identification of patterns in their sequential positioning and their pragmatic consequences. For example, a particle like *omanye* (“you know”) may occur in different positions—pre-positioned before a clause, interjected mid-turn, or placed at the end—each influencing how the utterance is interpreted by interlocutors. These variations may reflect agreement, mitigation, emphasis, or epistemic stance (Bolden, 2009; Schiffrin, 1987).

Discourse particles function as contextualization cues (Gumperz, 1982), signaling speaker intent, structuring talk, and guiding listener interpretation. CA is particularly adept at analyzing how these particles index elements such as politeness, certainty, doubt, or resistance. Moreover, they play critical roles in managing repair sequences, maintaining topic continuity, or marking alignment and disalignment (Fox & Thompson, 2010). Within the Lutsotso cultural-linguistic context, these interactional functions are deeply embedded in normative communication practices and social hierarchies.

CA’s principle of sequential organization—where each utterance is both shaped by the preceding one and projects what comes next—is essential for understanding the placement and function of discourse particles (Schegloff, 2007). For instance, Lutsotso speakers may use a turn-initial particle to mark topical shifts, signal agreement, or initiate resistance. CA

also draws on the concept of *recipient design*, which emphasizes that speakers construct their utterances with their interlocutor's knowledge, status, and expectations in mind (Sacks et al., 1974). This is crucial for analyzing how Lutsotso speakers tailor the use of discourse particles to specific social contexts, communicative goals, and relational dynamics.

A disco-pragmatic approach integrates CA with other pragmatic and sociolinguistic traditions, including Relevance Theory (Sperber & Wilson, 1995), Ethnography of Communication (Hymes, 1974), and stance-taking frameworks (Du Bois, 2007). This blended methodology allows researchers to explore not only the sequential function of particles but also their roles in expressing politeness, identity, power dynamics, and cultural values. In Lutsotso interactions, for instance, some particles may encode deference to elders, convey solidarity, or perform gendered or age-specific communicative roles.

The sociocultural grounding of CA, particularly when informed by ethnographic perspectives, enhances its capacity to illuminate how discourse particles encode local communicative norms and ideologies. These include subtle strategies for expressing disagreement, signaling communal identity, or observing culturally salient expectations regarding age, authority, and respect (Duranti, 1997; Heller, 2001). Such grounding is especially valuable in under-documented indigenous languages like Lutsotso, where discourse particles may not be easily translatable yet perform essential pragmatic work.

Applying CA to the study of Lutsotso discourse particles contributes not only to a fine-grained linguistic analysis but also to language documentation and revitalization efforts. Since many of these particles encode culturally specific interactional practices, analyzing them in context provides vital insight for translation, education, and intergenerational language transmission (Enfield & Sidnell, 2017). Moreover, CA aligns with the aims of

discourse pragmatics by linking linguistic form to social function and emphasizing the dynamic co-construction of meaning in context.

2.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has examined the multifaceted functions of discourse particles, particularly within the Lutsotso language. Discourse particles serve primarily as tools for interaction rather than carriers of propositional content—they manage interpersonal relationships, structure talk, mark speaker stance, and assist listeners in interpreting speaker intentions. While Relevance Theory (Sperber & Wilson, 1995) offers significant insights into the inferential and procedural dimensions of discourse particles, it lacks the tools to capture their real-time interactional deployment, cultural embeddedness, and multimodal complexity.

A more comprehensive approach—integrating Conversation Analysis, discourse pragmatics, interactional sociolinguistics, and ethnographic methodologies—is thus essential. Conversation Analysis, in particular, is highly relevant due to its grounding in actual discourse, its attention to sequential and cultural dynamics, and its capacity to reveal how linguistic elements like discourse particles contribute to the ongoing negotiation of meaning. This perspective aligns with the broader goals of discourse-pragmatic research, which seeks to understand how language functions socially and contextually.

Finally, it has been established that the meaning and function of discourse particles are not fixed or universal but arise from their situated use in interaction. In the case of Lutsotso, these particles embody culturally specific communicative practices that require a context-sensitive, interdisciplinary approach to fully appreciate their significance and contribution to the language's discourse ecology.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodological framework adopted to examine contextual discourse particles in Lutsotso interactions through a disco-pragmatic lens. It covers the research design, research site, study population, sampling techniques and sample size, research instruments, data collection methods, data analysis procedures, validity and reliability strategies, and ethical considerations.

3.2 Research Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to analyze the use of discourse particles in natural Lutsotso interactions. Descriptive design is particularly suitable for studies that seek to observe, document, and interpret phenomena in their natural contexts without manipulation (Siedlecki, 2020). In the context of a disco-pragmatic framework, which merges discourse analysis with pragmatics, this design enabled the researcher to capture language use as it occurred, thereby preserving contextual and interactional authenticity.

The design facilitated systematic observation and documentation of discourse particle usage in real-time conversations, allowing the study to focus on contextual elements such as formality, social roles, and sequential placement (Holmes & Stubbe, 2003; Schifffrin, 1987). As a non-interventionist approach, it aligned with the principles of naturalistic inquiry inherent in discourse analysis (Silverman, 2013).

Moreover, this design enabled functional categorization of discourse particles (e.g., topic markers, turn-taking devices, hesitation markers) and interpretation through a pragmatic lens (Blakemore, 2002). By situating discourse particle use within socio-cultural contexts, the research uncovered indigenous communicative norms and strategies, consistent with ethnopragmatic perspectives (Goddard, 2006).

3.3 Research Site

The study was conducted in Eshisiru village, located in Lurambi Sub-County, Kakamega County, Kenya. The village was selected purposively due to its high concentration of native Lutsotso speakers and accessibility to key social domains relevant for data collection. This area is approximately four kilometers from Kakamega town along the Kakamega–Bungoma road.

According to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS, 2019), the Batsotso population is approximately 162,822, making this region linguistically appropriate for the study. Additionally, the regulatory and social environment of the site was conducive to field research, facilitating access to both participants and naturally occurring discourse events.

3.4 Study Population

The study population comprised fluent and native speakers of Lutsotso, spanning various age groups, genders, and social backgrounds. These individuals actively participated in natural social interactions, providing linguistically rich and pragmatically relevant data. The population's linguistic identity and cultural embeddedness made it suitable for analyzing discourse particles from a disco-pragmatic perspective (Mey, 2001; Gumperz, 1982).

Participants were drawn from social contexts such as marketplaces, homesteads, churches, and schools—settings in which spontaneous conversations could be recorded and observed.

3.5 Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

Purposive and snowball sampling techniques were employed to select participants and discourse data. Purposive sampling enabled the selection of individuals and interactions that met specific linguistic criteria, such as fluency in Lutsotso and engagement in social activities where discourse particles are likely to occur (Heath, 2023).

Snowball sampling was used to access networks of fluent speakers not easily identifiable through formal lists (Barasa, 2017). This method was particularly effective for recruiting participants during community gatherings and informal events. Systematic random sampling was applied at the data extraction stage to obtain a representative corpus for analysis.

Following Vasileiou et al. (2018), qualitative studies often require smaller, purpose-driven samples that can provide in-depth, textured data. This study sampled 30% of the total corpus

(18 out of 60 discourse particles), aligning with precedent in linguistic research (Mudogo, 2017; Grinevald, 2001; Trudgill, 1973).

3.6 Data Gathering Methods and Research Tools

To capture the spontaneous use of discourse particles, the study utilized multiple data collection tools, including audio and video recordings, participant observation, field notes, and semi-structured interviews. This triangulated approach ensured a robust and context-sensitive dataset (Taherdoost, 2021).

3.6.1 Elicitation

Elicitation techniques included guided conversations, role-play scenarios (e.g., market transactions, greetings, and conflict resolution), and stimulus-based tasks using culturally relevant images or videos. These methods prompted participants to produce speech naturally embedded with discourse particles (Zeiler, 2005).

3.6.2 Extraction

The extraction process involved isolating discourse particles from transcribed conversations using both manual annotation and automated search techniques (Noyes & Lewin, 2020). Particles were identified based on criteria such as non-propositional meaning and positional usage in utterances (Markowitz, 2021). Data were filtered by context, speaker type, and interaction type to allow comparative analysis.

Analytical methods such as sequential analysis and CA principles (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974) were applied to examine functional and positional patterns in particle use.

3.7 Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected through naturalistic recordings, participant observation, and interviews. Audio and video recordings captured spontaneous interactions in public and private domains. Transcriptions were made verbatim, using Jeffersonian conventions to mark turn-taking, pauses, and prosodic features (Atkinson & Heritage, 1984).

Participant observation provided ethnographic context, including gestures, tone, and social dynamics. Semi-structured interviews and debriefings with participants yielded metalinguistic insights, which supported interpretive analysis.

3.8 Validity and Reliability

To enhance validity, the study employed triangulation (Denzin, 1978) by combining data sources, methods, and theoretical perspectives. Naturalistic observation ensured ecological validity, while contextual anchoring linked particle usage to specific sociocultural contexts (Blommaert, 2005).

Reliability was achieved through systematic transcription, a detailed coding scheme for particle functions, and inter-coder agreement measures such as Cohen's Kappa (McHugh, 2012). Member checking with participants also ensured the semantic validity of interpretations.

3.9 Data Analysis and Presentation

Analysis followed a multi-stage process: first, Transcription – Verbatim transcription using prosodic and interactional features. Secondly, Coding and Extraction – Discourse particles were coded for position and function (e.g., turn-taking, emphasis, politeness). Thirdly, Contextual Analysis – Utilized frameworks from Relevance Theory (Sperber & Wilson, 1995) and Conversation Analysis to examine pragmatic functions. Fourthly, Sequential Analysis – Identified particle placement in adjacency pairs, repairs, and transitions. Lastly, Comparative Analysis – Examined usage across speaker categories and settings.

Presentation employed annotated excerpts with glosses and translations, thematic maps categorizing function and context, and visual summaries of usage patterns.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

Ethical integrity was prioritized through informed consent, anonymity, and cultural sensitivity. Participants were briefed in Lutsotso or Kiswahili and signed consent forms before recording. Real names were replaced with pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality.

The researcher respected local norms and consulted community elders for cultural approval. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), and local authorities provided additional permissions.

Participants were given opportunities to ask questions, review findings, and receive feedback. The study avoided recording during sensitive conversations and ensured the data was used only for academic purposes.

3.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented a methodologically rigorous and ethically responsible approach to investigating contextual discourse particles in Lutsotso. Using a descriptive qualitative design, the study integrated discourse and pragmatic methodologies to capture authentic language use in context. Data were collected from native speakers across diverse social settings using purposive, snowball, and systematic sampling. Analysis involved transcription, coding, contextual interpretation, and theoretical mapping. Ethical guidelines ensured the dignity and rights of participants were upheld, supporting the credibility and cultural sensitivity of the research.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the data analysis and interpretation based on the study's three objectives: (1) to evaluate the pragmatic functions of discourse particles in Lutsotso interactions, (2) to examine how discourse particles account for contextual meaning, and (3)

to assess the extent to which Relevance Theory explains the use of discourse particles in Lutsotso.

The data comprise naturally occurring spoken Lutsotso interactions, collected in authentic communicative settings. These interactions were recorded, transcribed, and segmented into conversational turns to identify and isolate discourse particles. The analysis follows the framework of Edmondson's (1981) model of spoken discourse, which supports the recognition of functional patterns in natural conversation.

A disco-pragmatic analytical approach—drawing on both Relevance Theory (Sperber & Wilson, 1995) and Conversation Analysis (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974)—is employed to interpret the pragmatic roles of discourse particles. This integrated framework allows for an in-depth exploration of how discourse particles function to signal speaker intent, manage turn-taking, and guide inferential comprehension in context.

The identified discourse particles are categorized by type, positional occurrence within the utterance (initial, medial, or final), and their interactional context (e.g., greetings, disagreements, storytelling, or requests). This categorization provides insight into how discourse particles operate pragmatically and contextually to shape meaning and coherence in interaction. Furthermore, the study assesses how these patterns align with the principles of Relevance Theory, particularly in terms of cognitive effects, processing effort, and procedural meaning, thus fulfilling the third objective.

4.2 Pragmatic Functions of Discourse Particles in Lutsotso Interactions

In this section a discussion of the functions of the discourse particles earlier identified is presented. The particles were identified from the exchanges in which they occur. In a

conversation, the exchange is so defined that it produces an outcome. The nature of the outcome is determined by the illocutionary (and other) acts, which are realized by the elements of which the exchange is, composed (Edmondson, 1981).

The pragmatic functions of discourse particles in Lutsotso were categorized on the foundation of as explained below. From the collected data, we identified and described the following functions of discourse particles in Lutsotso;

4.2.1 Cutting in politely

From a disco-pragmatic approach—which combines discourse analysis and pragmatics—we can examine how contextual discourse particles in *Lutsotso* interactions help speakers cut in politely or interject smoothly during conversations. This approach considers both the *structure* of interaction and the *intended social meanings*, including politeness, turn-taking, and relevance.

“Cutting in politely” means interrupting a speaker or entering a conversation without causing offense or disrupting social harmony (Ward, 2014). In Lutsotso, this is managed through contextual discourse particles—small but meaningful words that mark speaker intention, attitude, or conversational alignment.

To analyze how contextual discourse particles, enable speakers to cut in politely during Lutsotso interactions from a disco-pragmatic approach, we will combine insights from Discourse Pragmatics, Relevance Theory, and Conversation Analysis (CA). The analysis will show how these particles manage turn-taking, express politeness, and signal intentions, all within the Lutsotso cultural and linguistic context.

In Lutsotso, contextual discourse particles act as pragmatic cues that Soften interruptions. To explain how contextual discourse particles, soften interruptions in Lutsotso interactions, we can take a disco-pragmatic approach, integrating conversation analysis and pragmatic function to show how speakers maintain politeness and mitigate face threats during overlaps or turn-takings. **Example Interaction 1:** (Context: *The interaction is about inequality between the male gender and the female gender*).

A: *We shile khubolela ta khu mukhasi...* (So, we were saying about that woman...)

B: *Ebu, nakhu khubolela chinyalukhokho.* (Please, allow me to just say something small.)

“Ebu” ‘please’ marks deference, signaling that the speaker is not rudely interjecting but respectfully requesting to add something. It softens the interruption by showing respect for the ongoing speaker's turn. The contextual discourse ‘Used to pre-emptively request attention or signal a polite cut-in.

The discourse particle **"ebu"** *“please”* is functioning as a politeness marker that plays a significant role in managing conversational turn-taking and mitigating the potential face-threatening act of interruption. Its use here is not simply about requesting permission; rather, it performs layered pragmatic functions within the interactional structure. **"Ebu"** ‘please’ acts as a pre-emptive strategy to initiate a shift in the floor. Speaker B, by using **“ebu,”** ‘please’ signals a desire to take a turn without directly challenging the current speaker’s right to continue. It thus prevents overlap conflict and sustains the cooperative nature of the conversation. The particle conveys deference, indexing respect and social awareness. Instead of bluntly interrupting, the speaker uses **"ebu"** ‘please’ to attenuate the force of the interruption, aligning with Brown and Levinson’s (1987) concept of negative politeness,

which involves showing restraint and avoiding imposition. Drawing on Gumperz's (1982) notion of contextualization cues, "*ebu*" 'please' helps frame the speaker's intent—that is, not to disrupt but to contribute meaningfully. It orients the hearer to interpret the coming utterance as cooperative rather than adversarial.

The discourse particle "*Ebu*" 'please' contributes to the organization of interaction by signaling a shift in topical focus or inserting an additional comment without derailing the flow of conversation. This makes it a procedural discourse marker in the sense of Blakemore (2002), guiding the interpretation process by constraining the hearer's inferential path.

In the context of Lutsotso sociocultural norms—where respect for conversational hierarchy and age/status often dictates turn-taking— "*ebu*" 'please' embodies cultural norms of linguistic politeness, particularly in intergenerational or formal discourse. This aligns with Holmes' (1995) argument that discourse particles often serve as markers of interpersonal stance and solidarity.

In summary, "*ebu*" 'please' in this context functions beyond a mere lexical item of politeness. It serves as a contextual discourse particle that manages interactional dynamics, mitigates interruption, shows respect, and ensures cooperative discourse. It allows the speaker to enter the conversation delicately, maintaining both interpersonal harmony and conversational structure.

Example Interaction 2: (Context: *The interactants are conversing about helping a child that was in need in their village*)

A: *Basi, obulayi bwangu bwari khu chinga...* (So, my goodness was shown in that...)

B: *Aa, khulindile... khandi shindu shimbu.* (Hold on, let's wait... that's not exactly what happened.)

“*Aa*” ‘hold on’ softens the correction by easing into disagreement, preventing face-threatening acts and allowing a more collaborative tone. The speaker B, uses the discourse particle to soften abrupt interjections, especially when correcting or disagreeing.

From a discourse perspective, the particle “*Aa*” serves as a turn-initiating and turn-reclaiming device. By uttering “*Aa*,” Speaker B marks an intent to interrupt or shift the ongoing turn, but in a way that does not appear abrupt or combative. It delays the full force of the disagreement, creating a “buffer zone” before Speaker B introduces the correction. This helps to manage floor control and reduce turn-taking friction.

In pragmatic terms, “*Aa*” ‘please’ functions as a mitigating discourse marker, softening the force of the following corrective utterance. Instead of directly contradicting Speaker A, Speaker B uses “*Aa*” ‘please’ to: signal hesitation or a pause, which reduces the abruptness of the interjection, display politeness by not launching straight into a face-threatening act, and prepare the hearer for a shift in perspective, thus facilitating smoother interactional alignment. This aligns with Brown and Levinson’s (1987) politeness theory, where mitigation serves to preserve the positive face of the addressee (in this case, Speaker A).

From a Relevance-Theoretic (Sperber & Wilson, 1995; Blakemore, 2002) angle, “*Aa*” ‘please’ encodes procedural meaning — guiding the hearer to adjust their expectations about the relevance of the next utterance. It implicitly suggests that: The current trajectory of the discourse may need revision, and the upcoming information contrasts or reframes what has just been said.

This helps the hearer process the input with minimal cognitive effort and maximum contextual effect — the core of optimal relevance.

In interactional discourse terms, Speaker B's use of "*Aa*" 'please' indicates a momentary dis-alignment with Speaker A, but the form it takes avoids escalation. The correction "*khandi shindu shimbu*" (that's not exactly what happened) could potentially threaten Speaker A's face if delivered harshly. However, prefacing it with "*Aa*" makes the dis-alignment negotiable, fostering collaborative repair rather than conflict.

The discourse particle "*Aa*" 'please' in this exchange performs multiple layered functions: It softens disagreement through pragmatic mitigation, regulates turn-taking within the discourse structure, signals procedural instructions to the hearer to reinterpret or reassess the prior utterance, and promotes interactional harmony by cushioning face-threatening corrections.

Thus, "*Aa*" 'please' exemplifies how discourse particles function not only as fillers or hesitation markers, but as strategic tools in conversational management, meaning negotiation, and facework — especially within the disco-pragmatic framework that combines structural discourse roles and speaker intentions with context-sensitive pragmatic implications.

Example Interaction 3: (Context: *The interaction is about the market place, and what happened while one of them was there*).

A: *Khwabira Ikonyero, alafu nikhutsia khushiro...* (We passed through Lwandeti, then went to the market...)

B: *Kho khubole, eshiro eshio shili nabandu abanji sana.* (So, that market was really crowded?)

In the exchange, Speaker A is narrating a past experience involving movement from one location to another (“*Khwabira Ikonyero, alafu nikhutsia khusiro...*” – “We passed through Lwandeti, then went to the market...”). Speaker B on the other hand, interjects with “*Kho khubole, eshiro eshio shili nabandu abanji sana.*” (“So, that market was really crowded?”).

Here, “*kho*” ‘so’ serves as a discourse particle that marks intersubjective engagement and topic linkage. Rather than aggressively interrupting or derailing Speaker A’s narrative, Speaker B uses “*kho*” ‘so’ to align with the emerging topic and signal interest in the narrative trajectory. The follow-up statement then elaborates or seeks clarification.

From a Brown and Levinson (1987) politeness theory perspective, the act of interrupting or inserting a comment mid-narrative could constitute a face-threatening act, particularly a threat to the speaker’s negative face (i.e., their desire for autonomy in the conversational floor).

By prefacing the interjection with “*kho*”, ‘so’ Speaker B softens the intrusion, transforming it from an interruption into a collaborative elaboration. This aligns with discourse mitigation strategies often observed in naturally occurring conversation, where interactants seek to minimize imposition and display attentiveness.

In Relevance Theory (Sperber & Wilson, 1995) and subsequent work by Blakemore (2002) and Escandell-Vidal (1998), discourse particles like “*kho*” ‘so’ are seen to encode procedural meaning rather than conceptual content. That is, “*kho*” ‘so’ does not contribute a semantic proposition of its own, but rather guides the hearer’s inferential processes.

In this case, “*kho*” ‘so’ signals that what follows is to be understood not as a new topic, but as an inferential elaboration or interpretive bridge from what was just said. It instructs the hearer (Speaker A) to interpret the statement about the market as connected to the previous utterance – an elaboration or assessment, rather than a topic shift.

Within Conversation Analysis (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974), the notion of turn-taking is critical. Speaker B’s use of “*kho*” ‘so’ acts as a turn-entry device, signaling their intention to speak without challenging the main speaker’s epistemic authority or narrative control. This fosters co-participation, which is highly valued in cooperative talk-in-interaction.

The use of “*kho*” ‘so’ thus minimizes the disruptive force of the turn. It marks the turn as additive and supportive, not combative or corrective. This resonates with what Schiffrin (1987) terms as discourse markers aiding topic coherence and interactive negotiation.

From a contextualization perspective, “*kho*” ‘so’ serves as a cue for interpreting the interactional intent behind the utterance. Rather than assuming antagonism or disinterest, the particle instructs the listener to read the move as cooperative, thus modulating the speaker’s intent.

Table 1: Summary of Functions of "*Kho*" ‘so’ in This Exchange:

Function	Description
Turn-softener	Eases the insertion into the narrative, mitigating the face threat

Procedural guide	Signals that the contribution is inferentially related to the previous utterance
Discourse aligner	Helps maintain topic coherence and signals speaker alignment
Politeness marker	Minimizes imposition, showing deference and interest.
Contextualization cue	Aids in interpreting the interjection as a cooperative move rather than a disruptive one

The particle “*kho*” ‘so’ in “*Kho khubole*” ‘so can we say’ functions as a multi-functional discourse particle with pragmatic, relational, and cognitive effects. It exemplifies the Lutsotso speaker’s skill in co-managing discourse, demonstrating how language users navigate social interaction with subtle linguistic tools that balance inference, politeness, and discourse coherence. Its role in minimizing the scale and intrusiveness of an interjection reflects its centrality in maintaining conversational harmony within Lutsotso interactional norms. “*Kho khubole*” ‘so’ reduces the force of interruption, presenting it as a small addition, which makes the interruption appear more collaborative and less imposing. The discourse particle, ‘*kho*’ ‘so’ minimizes the scale of the interruption — making the interjection seem brief and non-intrusive.

Example Interaction 4: (*Context: The interactants are conversing about the waiting for each other while they were at the D. O’s office*)

A: *Khandi ndatsia muofisi mwa DO...* (And then I went to the DO’s office...)

B: *Nebutswa*, *shiwayandinda ta*? (But, didn't you wait before that?)

From a Conversation Analysis (CA) perspective, Speaker B's use of "*Nebutswa*" 'but' occurs at the initial position of their turn. This positioning is crucial because initial discourse markers often frame the pragmatic force of the upcoming utterance. Here, it alerts Speaker A that the next move may involve a shift in narrative sequence, a challenge to accuracy, or a demand for clarification.

While B's contribution could be seen as a correction or challenge to the assumed sequence of events narrated by A, the use of "*Nebutswa*" 'but' mitigates potential face threats. It prevents a blunt contradiction and prepares the ground for a collaborative repair of the narrative.

In pragmatic terms, "*Nebutswa*" 'but' serves as a contrastive discourse particle that: Softens disagreement or correction by acknowledging the prior speaker's contribution before offering a revision or competing version. Functions within Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness framework as a negative politeness strategy, in that it mitigates imposition by cushioning a potentially face-threatening act — namely, contradiction.

Rather than outright rejecting Speaker A's narrative, B uses "*Nebutswa*" 'but' to politely signal a gap or omission in the shared understanding and to invite joint clarification.

From a Relevance Theory lens (Sperber & Wilson, 1995), discourse particles like "*Nebutswa*" 'but' have procedural meaning. That is, they don't contribute to the propositional content, but instead guide the inferential process of the hearer. It alerts the listener (and hearer's cognitive environment) that the relevance of the upcoming utterance lies in its relation of contrast or correction to what has just been said. It also narrows the

interpretive path, prompting the hearer to recover an intended implicature — perhaps that something important (e.g., waiting) was overlooked or needs to be reconsidered in the sequence.

Example in Interaction 5: *(Context: Speaker A is narrating a story. Speaker B wants to contribute or clarify.)*

Speaker A: “*Nakhubolela khu wulo we mung'ali... (I was telling you about the medicine man...)*”

Speaker B: “*Ne, weyakhulanga khumuse? (And, wasn't he also the one who prayed?)*”

Discourse Particle: “*Ne*” ‘and’ signals *alignment* and shared storytelling, mitigating the abruptness of the interruption. In terms of pragmatic effect, ‘*ne*’ ‘and’ encourages collaborative turn-taking, making the cut-in polite and relevant. In order to fit Discourse Pragmatic insight, the particle invites co-narration while preserving face.

Example in Interaction 6: *(Context: Group discussion; Speaker C wishes to interject supportively)*

Speaker A: “*Ebakhi baana imboka yinda yenda...*” *(These days, children do whatever they want...)*

Speaker C: “*Eeh, nende nebaana bosi babere khu TV...*” *(Yes, even all they do is watch TV...)*

Discourse particle “*Eeh*” ‘yes’ plays the function of acknowledging the speaker's point, showing agreement before offering input. For it to show the pragmatic effect, it smooths the transition to self-talk; reduces face-threatening force. The cut-in becomes a supportive interruption, promoting rapport and affiliative politeness.

Example in Interaction 14: (Context: Speaker A makes a general claim; Speaker B wants to introduce contrast.)

Speaker A: “*Abandu bali khu khwacha khukhasi... (People are too dependent nowadays...)*”

Speaker B: “***Lakini***, *shibali bosi... (But, not all of them...)*”

Discourse Particle “***lakini***” ‘but’ marks respectful disagreement or nuanced correction, and serves a pragmatic effect to avoid confrontation while asserting a divergent viewpoint. For the particle to indicates Disco-Pragmatic insight as it shows face-saving politeness and context sensitivity.

Example in Interaction 7: (Context: Speaker D wants to comment indirectly on what Speaker A said.)

Speaker A: “*Khu ching'ali, abari bali khu nyasi... (Yesterday, the elders were in the field...)*”

Speaker D: “***lola***, *bali nibabolanga khumakhuwa kobulimi? (because, is it true they were talking about farming?)*”

Discourse Particle: “***lola***” ‘see’ in reported speech is used here to mark hearsay or indirect commentary, and it offers a pragmatic effect to allow polite insertion that distances speaker from possible judgment. The discourse particle adds a layer of deference and protects speaker from being too assertive as a way of enhancing Disco-Pragmatic insight.

Table 1: **Particle(s) Function(s) in Softening Interruptions**

Function	Discourse Particle(s)	Politeness Strategy	Disco-Pragmatic Contribution

Agreement before speaking	<i>Eeh, na, omanye</i>	Positive politeness (showing solidarity)	Reduces threat of interruption
Introducing contrast	<i>Kana, nee koo, kachila lola</i>	Negative politeness (mitigates imposition)	Makes disagreement less face- threatening
Adding indirect info	<i>Lola, lakini</i>	Off-record politeness (avoids direct claim)	Shows respect, especially in hierarchy
Emphasizing shared context	<i>Eeh, na, koo,</i>	Relational alignment	Fosters intersubjectivity and shared footing

In Lutsotso interactions, the discourse particle "*omanye*" "You know" plays a vital role in managing turn-taking and politeness. It serves as a contextual discourse marker that softens interruptions or cut-ins, helping speakers negotiate conversational space respectfully. Below is an explanation and example to show how "*omanye*" is used to cut in politely:

Disco-pragmatic function of the DP '*omanye*' '*you know*' signals a polite interruption, indicates awareness of the ongoing conversation, prepares the addressee for a shift in speaker or topic, and helps mitigate face-threatening acts (Brown & Levinson, 1987)

Example in Interaction 8: (Context: Two speakers, A and B, are discussing a community meeting. Speaker C wants to add a clarification but does not want to disrupt rudely).

A: Eyo embeba eyile enyuma y'ekhutsitsi, yakhwama. (*That rat that came after the storm, it disappeared.*)

B: Ye, khu yile, khu yile khulomba khukhwitula amakuru. (*Yes, when it came, we tried to find out what happened.*)

C: Omanye, nekhwahwaho khubola ikindu kimo? (*Excuse me, may I say something?*)

C continues: Embeba yio siyo yenyuma y'ekhutsitsi – yakhwama kumachina. (*That rat did not come after the storm – it came from the machines.*)

"Omanye" 'you know' marks C's intention to interrupt politely. It respects the conversational floor and minimizes disruption, maintains interpersonal harmony, a key feature in Lutsotso social interaction, and allows C to insert information without undermining others.

From a disco-pragmatic approach (drawing from Conversation Analysis and Relevance Theory): **"Omany**e" cues a contextual shift, preparing listeners for a topic repair, addition, or clarification. It aligns with positive politeness strategies, appealing to in-group membership and respect, and acknowledges the right to speak held by the current speaker but asks for a brief turn.

The data collected clearly reveal that the discourse particles were employed to cut in, in a polite way. The impoliteness which could occur without these particles during any conversation was avoided. The speaker feels respected when interrupted by the listener, and this could be possible if and only if the interrupter does it by the use of relevant discourse particles. The tone changes during the production of these particles whereby the tone falls.

Look at the examples given below to see how they were used.

Example in interaction 9: (Circumstance: Conversation revolves around the culture of wearing of trousers by boys and girls)

Speaker B: Haya lirebo liakhabiri libere ombu abandu shibalalamikanga nibalola omwana omusiani nafwalile ilong'i lakini nali omwana omukhana balalamikanga sana shichila shi?

'The second question is that how come people do not complain when they see a boy wearing

a trouser but when it comes to a girl, they complain so much?'

Speaker C: Khwisie endolanga endi shichila emibiri chiabakhana shichikasiring mutsilong'i ta lakini chiabasiani chikasanga ...'

'To me, I think that the bodies of girls are not meant for trousers but for boys they are'

Speaker B: ***Kachila lenga***, nekaba mbu Mulongo anyala yetsa ingo saa sita tsieshiro nawe witse saa mbili

mupaka obole worula; nobulayi kweli?

'Because see' if a boy puts on a trouser and you also put on and girls owe us explanations, is that right?

Speaker C: shikanyalikhana ta

'by no means'

In the above conversation, interlocutor B cuts in to take over the floor even before the initial interlocutor is done explaining how the culture is unjust to the female gender in comparison

to the male gender when it comes to the idea of putting on trousers. The discourse particle *kachila lenga* (because see) has been used by interlocutor B to cut in politely and proceed to discuss on the subject by adding that if a male child puts on a trouser nothing bad happens to him but if a female child does the same, she is rebuked and even beaten thoroughly. The speaker C fails to feel disrespected by interlocutor B because he has used the discourse particle *kachila lenga* (because see) to start off the turn. The discourse particle used here plays the role of easing the utterance so that interlocutor C does not seem as she is impolite. Fukada and Asato (2004) note that few people appreciate being interrupted. It can be viewed as rude, sending a signal that what they are saying is not important. While taking over people when they are speaking should be avoided, but sometimes it is important.

Excerpts from our data show the discourse particles that were used by speakers in conversations to interrupt other speakers politely. The speakers used the discourse particles to interrupt the other speakers but effectively avoided making the interrupted speaker feel cut off rudely. From the corpus the discourse particles that were found to perform this function are *orio* (thank you), *shichila lenga* (because see) and *nee koo* (and by the way). The particles were produced with a falling intonation. Consider the following extract.

Example in Interaction 10: (Situation: The conversation is about wearing of trousers by boys and girls)

Speaker B: Haya lirebo liakhabiri libere ombu abandu shibalalamikanga nibalola omwana omusiani nafwalile ilong'i lakini nali omwana omukhana balalamikanga sana shichila shi?

‘The second question is that how come people do not complain when they see a boy wearing a trouser but when it comes to a girl, they complain so much?’

Speaker C: Khwisie endolanga endi shichila emibiri chiabakhana shichikasiring mutsilong'i ta lakini chiabasiani chikasanga ...'

'To me, I think that the bodies of girls are not meant for trousers but for boys they are'

Speaker B: Shichila lenga, nekaba mbu Mulongo anyala yetsa ingo saa sita tsieshiro nawe witse saa mbili mupaka obole worula; nobulayi kweli?

'Because see if a boy puts on a trouser and you also put on and you must explain, is that fair?'

Speaker C: Tawe 'No'

The above extract shows speaker C beginning her turn while the first respondent is still talking about how unfair the society is to girls when it comes to the idea of putting on trousers as compared to boys. Speaker B begins her turn with the discourse particle *shichila lenga* (because see) and goes ahead to give her comment on the topic by adding that if a boy who is a brother to the speaker C puts on a trouser he is not reprimanded but if speaker C does the same, she could even be beaten. This happens to be a specific example of how the society is unfair to girls but the previous speaker does not feel offended by being interrupted because the second interactant begins her turn with the discourse particle *shichila lenga* (because see). The discourse particle serves to soften the utterance so that the speaker does not sound rude, thereby offending the other participant.

Example 12 below further illustrates how another discourse particle *nee koo* (and) is used by speaker A to interrupt speaker B politely.

Example in Interaction 11: (Situation: The interviewer asks the respondent if they like watching DJ Afro)

Speaker A: Mwachama olulola DJ Afro?

‘Do you like watching DJ Afro?’

Speaker B: Khwachama halali omanyebabusi shibenyanga ta shichila.

‘We like watching but you know parents do not want ...because’

Speaker A: *Nee Koo* eshibi shiokhulola DJ Afro shili hena?

‘And, what is wrong with watching DJ Afro?’

Speaker C: Basubiranga mbari nolola DJ Afro nobiya

‘They believe that by watching DJ Afro you will be spoiled’

Speaker A: Kho toto mulolanga mbari tsishida tsino tsinyala okhurusibwa endie?

‘So, you think that how can these problems be solved?’

Speaker B: Sasa, nokhukholatsa shinga benyanga nikhwenya okhumenya mulembe ninabo.

‘Now, we will just do as they wish for the sake of peace’

Speaker A: Shionyala okhuyingana ninabo ta?

‘Can't you argue with your parents?’

Speaker C: shikwenyanga wakhuwa amanji ta.

‘we don't want a lot of issues’

Speaker A: Nee nikhuba nende obusanjirani?

‘And what if we have negotiation?’

Speaker B: Omany obusanjirani nobulayi lakini abandu bandi shibenyanga tawe ‘You know negotiations are nice but some people do not like’

This excerpt shows that speaker A abruptly interrupts speaker C to ask a question regarding whether it is wrong to watch DJ Afro. It is noted that the speaker A produces the discourse particle *nee koo* (and by the way) before producing the question. The particle *nee koo* (and by the way) produced with a falling intonation politely appeals to the listener. Therefore, the particle produced before the question makes speaker A to sound polite, thereby not offending the previous speaker by interrupting, and therefore the previous speaker does not feel offended by the interruption.

This scenario is repeated when speaker A also abruptly interrupts to pose a proposal that in order to solve problems in homes there should be family meetings. If the question and the proposal are posed without the discourse particles, they would appear rude because they are interruptions. The discourse markers *Nee koo* (and by the way), *shichila lenga* (because see) and *koo* (by the way) help a speaker redress Brown and Levinson (1987) face threatening act through which a speaker interrupts a listener’s freedom of action with orders, requests or suggestions.

From a discourse-pragmatic view these particles help manage intersubjectivity, turn allocation, and facework, they enable interpersonal harmony by reducing the threat level of interruptions, through Relevance Theory, particles guide hearer inference, suggesting the interruption is relevant and intended to cooperate, signal shared knowledge or expectations, mark politeness, humility, or alignment, and indicate epistemic stance or deference.

Looking at theoretical insights in terms of the Relevance Theory, these discourse particles help speakers maximize relevance with minimal effort and signal cognitive environment alignment between speaker and hearer.

In terms of Conversation Analysis (CA), these discourse particles assist in turn negotiation, especially self-initiated interruptions. They function as pre-sequences, making the transition smoother. Also, they follow the Face and Politeness Theory (Brown & Levinson). Discourse particles mitigate Face-Threatening Acts (FTAs) by: signaling deference, expressing solidarity, and reducing directness.

Contextual discourse particles in Lutsotso interactions play a central role in allowing speakers to cut in politely, by: managing turn-taking delicately, expressing solidarity or disagreement with politeness, and reflecting cultural norms of humility and respect. They are not just fillers — they are strategic tools that shape interactional dynamics in subtle but powerful ways within a disco-pragmatic framework.

4.3. 2 Initiate A New Turn/Conversation/Topic

To discuss how contextual discourse particles, initiate a new turn/conversation/topic in Lutsotso interactions from a disco-pragmatic approach, we had to combine insights from Discourse Analysis (DA) and Pragmatics, especially from Conversation Analysis (CA) and Relevance Theory (RT). These perspectives help us understand how speakers use particles not only to manage talk but also to signal shifts in interactional footing or thematic focus.

From a disco-pragmatic perspective, Discourse Analysis aided in examining how discourse particles structure spoken interactions, cue transitions, or organize discourse flow. On the other hand, pragmatics helped to examine how these particles encode speaker intention,

manage shared knowledge, and guide hearer interpretation. Conversation Analysis helped to explain how turns are taken or changed, and Relevance Theory helped explain how speakers use these particles to signal cognitive effects and guide relevance expectations during topic shifts.

Consider examples from Lutsotso interactions given below:

Example in Interaction 13: *(Context: It is at home and the interactants are talking about the market and also family affairs.)*

Speaker A: Ndakhusokoni. Yali nende ishindu shiokhumbolela. *(I went to the market. She had something to tell me.)*

Speaker B: *Kho*, omwana wo aliarie? *(So, how is your child doing?)*

The particle “*kho*” ‘so’ acts as a topic-shifting marker. It concludes the previous discourse unit and initiates a new thematic concern—the welfare of speaker A’s child. Pragmatically, it signals a boundary and invites a new frame of relevance (RT), aligning with the floor management norms in CA. The particle “*kho*” ‘so’ in Lutsotso functions here not merely as a filler or connector, but as a contextual discourse particle with a significant disco-pragmatic function. Specifically, it marks topic transition from market to the child.

“*Kho*” ‘so’ concludes a previous discourse segment, often signaling that a prior topic has been sufficiently addressed or exhausted. Its placement at the beginning of the turn helps signal a thematic shift, making room for a new subject of conversation—the child’s well-being. This marks a clear boundary in the interaction and helps the conversation remain orderly.

From the perspective of Relevance Theory, “*kho*” ‘so’ introduces a new cognitive environment or frame of reference. The hearer is cued to adjust their expectations and processing efforts toward interpreting the new topic as relevant. The use of “*kho*” ‘so’ increases cognitive salience of the subsequent question, helping the addressee process the shift without confusion.

Within Conversation Analysis (CA), “*kho*” ‘so’ plays a key role in floor management. There is turn organization as the contextual discourse particle- ‘*kho*’ ‘so’- helps the speaker B take or retain the floor in a polite and coordinated way, showing they are not interrupting but building on the ongoing interaction. In addition, there is turn transition cue as it signals a smooth transition from one sub-topic to another, thus preventing abruptness or disjointedness in the conversation. Lastly, there is interactional alignment as the particle allows the interlocutors to align interactionally, showing that the speaker is following the norms of orderly turn-taking and thematic relevance.

In Lutsotso conversational culture, such particles often carry subtle interpersonal cues which serve as softening device. “*Kho*” ‘so’ has softened the shift, avoiding abruptness that may come across as insensitive or too direct, especially when moving from one speaker A’s concern, to speaker B’s concern. Also, it enhances relational warmth by marking a gentle topic shift, the speaker B appears attentive and engaged, particularly when inquiring about something personal like the wellbeing of a child.

The discourse particle “*kho*” ‘so’ operates as a topic-shifting and turn-managing marker. It has both cognitive (RT) and interactional (CA) relevance, whereby RT triggers a new relevance frame whereas CA manages floor and topic transitions smoothly. Its use reflects speakers’ awareness of conversational norms and relational sensitivity in Lutsotso discourse.

Example in Interaction 14: (Context: The interactants are conversing about work and creating time to visit each other).

Speaker A: Ndali nendi nende emilimo eminji. (*I was very busy at work.*)

Speaker B: *Wulila*, ni lazima khuchenderane! (*Well, we should still make time to visit!*)

The contextual discourse particle, “***Wulila***” ‘listen’ introduces a new turn and reactivates speaker engagement. It adds emphasis and shows renewed interest or concern, marking a pivot from listening to taking the floor. From a disco-pragmatic view, “***wulila***” ‘listen’ operates at the boundary between acknowledgement and initiative, marking intentional transition.

The contextual discourse particle “***Wulila***” (‘listen’) plays a pivotal role in Lutsotso interactions by facilitating a shift in speaker dynamics, particularly at points of turn-taking and topic management. Its primary function is to introduce a new turn while simultaneously reactivating or heightening speaker engagement. In the interaction above, “***Wulila***” ‘listen’ acts as a preparatory marker, signaling that the speaker is about to take or reclaim the conversational floor. It alerts interlocutors that a shift is about to occur—from passive listening or shared understanding to assertive contribution or intervention. This aligns with Conversation Analysis (CA) where such particles function as turn-prefacing devices, managing interactional boundaries. Speaker B uses “***Wulila***” ‘listen’ to interrupt, shift the direction, and challenge A’s account.

From the perspective of Relevance Theory (RT), “***Wulila***” ‘listen’ serves to reframe the interaction, signaling that what follows is of high cognitive or emotional salience. Speaker B uses the particle to reorient speaker A’s attention, suggesting that a relevant and possibly

corrective or urgent point is about to be made. This particle thus operates not merely at a surface level of turn structure but at a deeper pragmatic level, shaping how the next utterance is processed and prioritized.

Disco-pragmatically, “*Wulila*” ‘listen’ sits at the boundary between responsive and initiative discourse acts. It often follows some form of acknowledgement or passive participation and ushers in a proactive communicative stance. The speaker B moves from alignment (nodding, silence, brief affirmations) to taking assertive control of the conversation. In the example provided above, “*Wulila*” ‘listen’ signals a pivot from agreement or silence to counterpoint.

In interaction given above, “*Wulila*” ‘listen’ carries an emotive force. It adds urgency, emphasis, or seriousness to the utterance it precedes. This marks it as more than a simple attention-getting device; it becomes a modal particle reflecting speaker attitude—concern, frustration, caution, or persuasion. In the area of strategic management of interaction, the discourse particle, ‘*wulila*’ ‘listen’ is used effectively, to enable speaker B to politely interrupt without face-threatening directness, signal disagreement or clarification in a socially acceptable manner, redirect attention to a different or more pressing topic, and highlight speaker authority or credibility.

From a disco-pragmatic perspective, the discourse particle “*Wulila*” ‘listen’ functions on multiple levels: structurally, it marks a turn and shift in speaker role; pragmatically, it signals relevance and intention; and interpersonally, it modulates engagement, emotion, and politeness.

It exemplifies how contextual discourse particles in Lutsotso are not merely fillers or lexical items, but strategic tools for managing participation, floor rights, and meaning negotiation.

Example in Interaction 15: (Context: The discussion is revolving around eating habits, and abruptly changes to health).

Speaker X: Abana balile bulayi. (*The children ate well.*)

Speaker K: *Lakini*, Shisia yali ne khusota. (*But, Shisia had a cough.*)

In the interaction provided above, the discourse particles “*lakini*” ‘but’ introduces contrastive information, initiating a topical shift within the same thematic domain (health/well-being). It pragmatically signals non-alignment or addition of perspective. In discourse terms, it restructures the flow, using topic management mechanisms (CA) and directing the hearer’s cognitive focus (RT).

In the interaction provided above, speaker K employs discourse particle “*lakini*” (‘but’) which serves multiple pragmatic and discourse-structuring roles within Lutsotso interaction, particularly when operating within the same broad thematic domain—such as health or well-being. At the most basic level, “*lakini*” ‘but’ introduces contrastive information. It negotiates meaning by acknowledging the preceding utterance (which is health-based) and then qualifying, modifying, or challenging it. This aligns with its canonical use as a contrastive conjunction, but in discourse, its role is more nuanced—it signals a shift in stance rather than just logical opposition.

From a discourse-pragmatic perspective, “*lakini*” ‘but’ has been used by speaker K to mark a topical pivot—not to an entirely new topic, but to a new sub-theme within the same overarching domain. In the health-related example, the speaker remains within the concern of well-being, but shifts from clinical condition to environmental factors. Such a move is

important in interaction because it helps reorganize the discourse, providing a structured progression of concerns. It also enables the speaker to take the floor and reframe the discussion without abruptness.

From the lens of Conversation Analysis (CA), "*lakini*" 'but' acts as a topic management mechanism in the above example. It signals a possible repair or reorientation, a move to withhold agreement or delay affirmation, and a preference structure where the speaker avoids outright contradiction but introduces a dis-preferred turn (e.g., bad news, critique, concern). This respects interactional norms by managing face needs while still shifting focus.

Under Relevance Theory (RT), "*lakini*" 'but' functions to guide the hearer's cognitive environment. It activates a contrast set, prompting the listener to update their mental representation of the situation. The hearer X is cued to reassess prior assumptions, weigh contrasting information, and recalibrate the intended relevance of the message. This means "*lakini*" 'but' isn't just about opposing ideas—it modulates the relevance of preceding discourse by introducing new inferential paths.

In sum, "*lakini*" 'but' is not merely a lexical conjunction but a contextual discourse particle that introduces contrast or additional perspective, signals non-alignment or qualification of prior talk, manages floor and topic by enabling structured shift within a domain (CA), and orients cognitive expectations and inferences (RT). Its pragmatic force lies in how it reorganizes meaning and interaction, balancing responsiveness, progression, and relational harmony.

During any conversation, topics keep on shifting and this is made possible by the use of discourse particles. These topics touch various aspects of life. For instance, during a conversation, speakers may be talking about marriage, and all over a sudden shift to politics.

Observe the conversation given below: the discourse particle *haya* (okay) appears at the initial position of utterance to mark the starting of a different subject or topics.

Example in interaction 16 (*Context: changing of the topic from the rottenness of the world to anticipated drought*)

Speaker A: Kata eshialo shiabola toto?

‘Even the world is rotten surely?’

Speaker B: Bulano eshialo shikalukhana. Shishiri shinga tsinanga tsiefu ta.

‘Nowadays the world has changed. It is not like our days.’

Speaker A: Haya, nomanyile mbu ishimiyu shitsanga?

‘Okay, just know that drought is coming’

Speaker C: serikali kekhangana iyabe amayabo amanji.

‘The government should dig more wells’

In the given interaction, the discourse particle "**haya**" ‘okay’ in *Lutsotso* serves as a turn-initiating marker that functions both cognitively and interactionally, from a *disco-pragmatic* perspective (drawing on Relevance Theory and Conversation Analysis).

In the interaction given above, “**Haya**” ‘okay’ marks Speaker A’s re-entry into the conversation after Speaker B has just finished a reflective statement about changing times.

It signals readiness to speak and claims the conversational floor without abruptness, aligning with polite interactional norms. Apart from that, the particle indicates a shift from general societal commentary (on how the world has changed) to a specific concern—the approaching drought. This topical move is contextually relevant but distinct, thus “*haya*” ‘okay’ helps in smoothly bridging the thematic shift.

The discourse particle ‘**haya**’ ‘okay’ has been used by speaker A to frame attention or direction. It serves as a framing cue, telling the hearer to focus cognitively on what follows as informative or directive, and from a Relevance Theory lens, “*haya*” ‘okay’ raises the hearer's expectation of relevance, drawing attention to an upcoming important update or alert. “*Haya*” ‘okay’ also softens the potential bluntness of the upcoming declarative (“know that drought is coming”), making the assertion more socially palatable and less abrupt.

In CA terms, “*haya*” ‘okay’ helps manage the turn-taking system by: avoiding overlap or interruption, signaling a return to the floor or new topic proposal, maintaining conversational coherence within the group setting. In Conversation Analysis (CA), managing turn-taking is a key concern for conversational participants. The discourse particle “*haya*” ‘okay’ in Lutsotso (and related Bantu languages) functions as an interactional marker that regulates this process in the following key ways: “**Haya**” ‘Okay’ precedes speaker A’s self-initiated turn, acting as a buffer or transition token that prepares interlocutors for an upcoming contribution. It prevents abrupt entries into the conversation, thereby reducing the risk of overlapping speech. Here, “**haya**” ‘okay’ delays B’s response slightly, showing that they are aware of interactional timing, and avoids interrupting Speaker A.

In group or multi-party interactions, “*haya*” ‘okay’ serves as a claim to speakership—a subtle signal that the speaker is re-entering the conversation after a pause or allowing space

for others. It acts as a re-engagement cue, letting co-participants know that the speaker now intends to take a turn. In terms of pragmatic role this discourse particle helps maintain floor order and respect turn-allocation norms, especially in less formal or dynamic conversational settings.

In the example above, “*Haya*” ‘okay’ functions as a topic-shifting marker, often preceding a propositional unit that introduces a new concern, question, or stance. It marks a boundary between prior talk and upcoming content—guiding the listener’s expectations and orienting them to a shift in relevance (per Relevance Theory).

In this interaction, “*haya*” ‘okay’ is a contextual discourse particle that marks a new turn by Speaker A, signals a thematic shift from societal reflection to a warning about drought, frames the speaker’s utterance as relevant and actionable, and manages floor-taking politely and effectively. Its use exemplifies how discourse particles in *Lutsotso* function as crucial tools in structuring talk-in-interaction while reflecting socio-cognitive intentions.

Table 2: Summary Table of Functions:

Function	Role of ‘ <i>haya</i> ’ okay	CA Concept
Turn regulation	Signals speaker’s intention to speak	Turn-taking system
Floor management	Prevents interruption and overlap	Transition relevance
Topic shift	Marks boundary between topical units	Sequence organization
Coherence marker	Connects prior and next talk	Conversational cohesion

From a CA perspective, “*haya*” ‘okay’ is not just a filler but a strategic discourse particle. It helps interlocutors coordinate talk-in-interaction, manage participation rights, and preserve coherence—especially in settings where social politeness, shared knowledge, and group dynamics play crucial roles.

4.3.3 Highlight of a hypothesis that immediately follows

Discourse particles in Lutsotso conversations provide propositions to the listeners concerning the expected utterance. They can be used to point at the immediate utterance which is yet to be spoken. This means that they can be used to refer to back to what has already been stated. The active participation of the listener can be easily drawn in the conversation as it captures the attentiveness in preparation of what will come immediately in this manner. Consider the following conversation below.

Example in Interaction 17: (*Context: It is at the chief baraza where a chief and locals are discussing on how to reduce theft cases in the community*)

Speaker A: Sasa, khulakhola khurie khupungusie obwifi?

‘Now, what can we do to reduce theft cases?’

Speaker B: Abana abashiri ababukha bechesibwe okhuruka tsingokho nende tsimbusi tsiamabere ‘Children still young to be taught how to keep chickens and goats for milk.’

Speaker A: Balamanya akhubilinda obulayi?

‘Will they keep them well?’

Speaker C: Khubechesie okhubilinda mumera indayi.

‘We teach them to take care of them.’

Speaker B: Otushe okhumanya mbu abebusi kenyekha babechesie nibashiri abatiti.

‘You know parents ought to teach them while they still young’

In the example given above, the discourse particles such as “*sasa*”, “*mbu*”, and pragmatic cues like “*otushe okhumanya*” play critical roles in organizing the flow of conversation and reflect underlying disco-pragmatic hypotheses—those grounded in Discourse Analysis (DA) and Pragmatics, especially through the lenses of Conversation Analysis (CA) and Relevance Theory (RT).

From a Disco-pragmatic function, “*Sasa*” ‘now’ acts as a temporal and interactional pivot, marking a shift to a problem-posing phase. It signals urgency and topical relevance, shifting the focus from prior or assumed knowledge to a new joint problem space. On the other hand, looking at it from a CA perspective, it initiates a new sequence—an adjacency pair involving a question expecting extended responses. From an RT viewpoint, “*sasa*” ‘now’ primes the hearer for enhanced cognitive relevance, indicating that what follows is significant to shared goals.

Disco-pragmatic function “*Mbu*” ‘that’ operates as an epistemic marker, softening the claim and signaling that the information is not entirely asserted as new, but shared or inferable knowledge. In RT, this indicates inferential relevance: Speaker B assumes that the hearers can recover the intended interpretation from shared cultural norms (child training). In CA, “*mbu*” ‘that’ recycles and refines prior contributions, connecting Speaker C’s point (teaching them to care) and giving it intergenerational grounding.

The discourse particle “*Otushe okhumanya*” (‘You know’) in the interaction provided above serves as a discourse initiator. In relation to Disco-pragmatic function, this phrase serves as a meta-pragmatic cue, functioning like a pre-sequence that checks common ground. Looking at it from the perspective of CA, it helps pre-empt misalignment and prepares the floor for a normative claim, while still allowing space for response or negotiation. In RT, it primes for mutual manifestness, Speaker B assumes that the proposition (parents’ role) is already within the hearers’ cognitive environment.

Table 3: Summary: Hypotheses Highlighted

From a disco-pragmatic perspective, these particles and expressions reveal several interactional hypotheses:

Hypotheses	Support from Discourse
Turn-initiation and topical shift is often marked by particles.	“ <i>Sasa</i> ” initiates a new problem-focused sequence.
Discourse particles help negotiate knowledge status (new vs. shared).	“ <i>Mbu</i> ” marks reported/shared beliefs, lowering epistemic commitment.
Pre-sequences check or build common ground.	“ <i>Otushe okhumanya</i> ” anticipates alignment before elaboration.
Topic progression is collaboratively managed.	Each speaker expands on the previous, mediated by softeners like “ <i>mbu</i> ”.
Floor management and alignment are pragmatically cued.	Particles guide when/how turns are taken or re-taken

The discourse particles in this Lutsotso interaction reflect how speakers navigate conversational turns, manage epistemic stance, and negotiate relevance collaboratively. They support central disco-pragmatic hypotheses: that meaning is co-constructed, that topic and turn management are particle-sensitive, and that shared cognition (per RT) is signaled and maintained through seemingly small but powerful lexical items.

In the conversation above, interlocutor B employs the discourse particle '*otushe okhumanya*' '*mbu*' 'you need to know' 'that'. The particle is uttered with a raised tone and then preceded by a brief stop. Before then, an interlocutor was giving his views concerning the reduction of theft cases in the community. He then uses the particle '*otushe okhumanya*' '*mbu*' 'you need to know' 'that' before his clear introduction of a talk that talks about what needs to be done to deal with the problem at hand. The particle provides a clue on what to envision in the utterance since the interlocutor had been discussing about keeping chickens and goats.

Looking keenly at the chat given below, interlocutor B while discussing about female children, uses the discourse particle '*otushe okumanya*' '*mbu*' (you have to know that) which precedes the uttered talk about those people who work well because they are quite aware of the available finances after they have offered their services. The particle draws a special attention to a hypothesis with reference to as the reason behind the passion shown by the workers when it comes to working and the theory is that the reason could be available financial motivation.

Example in Interaction 18: (*Circumstance: The talk is all about the possibility of having good workers nowadays.*)

Interlocutor A: Abakholi abalai babereho abanyala okhukhula emilimo bila amang'ondo?

‘Are there good workers who can work without money?’

Interlocutor B: baho abanyala okhukhola nebutswa nibatiti.

‘They are there who can do although not many’

Interlocutor C: Ne otushe okhumanya mbu abakholi banyala okhukhola ne khane baluutsi eshindu...

‘Again, you need to bear in mind that laborers can work due some incentives’

This interaction illustrates how a discourse particle (in this case "*ne*" ‘again’ in Interlocutor C’s turn) pragmatically highlights a hypothesis in Lutsotso conversation from a discourse-pragmatic (disco-pragmatic) approach. Interlocutor A introduces a rhetorical or skeptical question about the existence of unpaid labor: "*Are there good workers who can work without money?*", interlocutor B acknowledges that such workers exist, though rarely. Interlocutor C begins with the particle "*ne*" (‘again’) and proposes a hypothesis: that laborers might work if they receive other incentives, even if not direct payment.

The function of "*ne*" (‘again’) in the context of Disco-pragmatic, Positionally, initiates a new turn. Cognitively, it reactivates attention and invites reevaluation of the ongoing topic (Relevance Theory), and Pragmatically, it signals an inferential or reflective shift—marking a transition from evaluation (A and B’s contributions) to a new hypothesis or reasoned speculation. "*Ne*" ‘again’ is not just a continuity marker. It reframes the talk, shifting the epistemic stance: from whether workers can work without money to *why they might choose to do so*.

In order to understand hypothesis as a pragmatic move, the speaker (C) is not asserting a factual claim but proposing a possibility: workers may still perform labor if indirect incentives (e.g., food, housing, respect) are involved. This hypothesis expands the conversational scope, introducing a layered perspective beyond the binary of paid/unpaid labor.

Table 4: Disco-Pragmatic Functions Observed:

Feature	Explanation
Turn-taking	“ Ne ” ‘again’ helps Interlocutor C smoothly take the floor without conflict.
Topic Management	Marks a thematic extension , not a shift but a deepening of the current topic.
Cognitive Cuing (RT)	Signals the listener to mentally adjust or add a new interpretive frame .
Alignment/Dis-alignment	“ Ne ” ‘again’ softens disagreement while proposing alternative reasoning , showing <i>partial alignment</i> with B and <i>soft resistance</i> to A.

From a disco-pragmatic perspective, the discourse particle “**ne**” ‘again’ plays a hypothesis-highlighting role by: managing interactional flow, cueing cognitive inferencing (Relevance

Theory), and introducing a nuanced position within the discussion. This underscores how Lutsotso speakers use contextual particles not merely for cohesion, but as pragmatic tools to navigate stance, inference, and topic development in social talk.

4.3.4 Capturing the Listener's Attention

Concentration of awareness on some phenomenon to the exclusion of other stimuli is very key in achieving communicative goal in any conversation. Discourse particles in Lutsotso help in the process of selectively concentrating on a discrete aspect of information, whether considered subjective or objective. The taking possession by the mind, in a clear and vivid form, of one out of what seem several simultaneously possible objects or trains of thought is what gives us attention, and it is made possible by the use of discourse particles.

Whenever two people are talking, there is need for a person to get the listener's attention in the conversation in order to be listened to. Excerpts from our data show that there were discourse particles that helped the speaker achieve this. The presence of these discourse particles helped to index the interpersonal relationship between the interlocutors thereby increasing the interpersonal relationship between them. Look at the following example.

The data collected from the field showed that discourse particles are used to capture the attention of the listeners. From the field, it was revealed that before a speaker starts talking, he or she has to ensure that his or her listener is attentive for the message to be passed across.

Example in Interaction 19: (*Context: the interviewer is talking to young male respondents about gender equality*)

Speaker C: ***Kho*** obolanga mbu omundu omusatsa niye wimoni ndafu?

‘So, are you saying that a man is important?’

Speaker A: ***Olalolanga*** kata niwitsa khumikunda, abandu bakhasi shibanyolanga tawe.

‘You are seeing even when it comes to land women do not inherit’

Speaker C: Mba likhuwa lienelo liali mukatiba yene ya kwaa eyo kalinji kari omundu musatsa ouliu nende abakhana bonyene shanyala okhubakabira omukunda ta? Lenga, omundu niyebule abakhana bonyene olaulila mbu kata wane abula abana.

‘Yes, that issue was in the constitution, if a man has daughters only why cannot he give land to them when he dies? Look if someone has daughters only you will hear people saying that he does not have children’

Speaker A: Balolanga bari abasiani nibo abana ne abakhana ta.

‘They say that boys are children but girls are not’

In Lutsotso interaction provided above, discourse particles serve as crucial tools for managing attention, structuring turns, and highlighting the *hypothetical* nature of statements. From a discourse-pragmatic approach—drawing from both Conversation Analysis (CA) and

Relevance Theory (RT)—we can explain how these particles help foreground hypothetical scenarios, especially within problem-solution, opinion, or evaluative contexts.

Example Interaction 20: (*Context: the interactants are conversing about theft cases and also farming activities*).

Speaker A: *Sasa, khulakhola khurie khupungusie obwifi?* ‘Now, what can we do to reduce theft cases?’

Speaker B: *Abana abashiri ababukha bechesibwe okhuruka tsingokho nende tsimbusi tsiamabere*

‘Children still young should be taught how to keep chickens and goats for milk.’

“*Sasa*” (‘Now’) in the interaction above serves as focus marker and hypothesis activator. “*Sasa*” ‘now’ pragmatically opens a new deliberative space. It marks a transition from possibly discussing past causes or consequences to presenting a problem that seeks hypothetical solutions. From a *Relevance-Theoretic* view, it cues the hearer B to expect relevant contextual effects—in this case, a speculative or planning-oriented utterance. In CA, it signals shift in sequential relevance: from background talk to problem-solving mode.

The utterance “*khulakhola khurie khupungusie obwifi?*” is not just an information-seeking question. It functions to invite co-participant reasoning—a type of *collaborative hypothesis construction*. The embedded discourse particle “*khurie*” (‘what [can we do]’) flags an open hypothetical space that both interlocutors can contribute to.

In the area of response as hypothesis actualization, speaker B’s response proposes a conditional, non-factual scenario: teaching young children animal care. This is a hypothetical solution, not yet realized, but presented as pragmatically plausible. The particle

“*abashiri*” (‘still young’) limits the scope of the hypothesis to a specific group, increasing its pragmatic relevance.

Example 26 shows speaker C using the discourse particle *olalolanga* (you are seeing) before the main utterance. During the interview it was noted that when the respondent used the particle, aligned the speaker and the listener face to face and therefore this captured the listener's attention. Another discourse particle, which performed the same function is *lenga*, which means see/look. In the above extract, the particle is produced in the middle of the utterance before the speaker goes ahead to ask what is wrong with a man giving his daughters land after his death. The question seems to be serious and in order to capture the attention of the listener, the speaker uses the particle before posing the question.

Example 16

(Situation: the interviewer is talking about how traditional circumcision was done)

Speaker A: Shiolola Eshisiru wefu abashebi bashebanga nomubano? Omusiani yemangatsa eshisatsa....

‘Don't you see at Eshisiru circumcisers used to circumcises by a knife? A boy could stand brave.’

Speaker B: Lakini abana bahumiyanga sana.

‘But children went through a lot of pain’

Speaker C: Shiolola obwahukhani bubereho nende obushebi bwabulano?

‘Don't you see there is a difference with these modern circumcisions?’

In the above example both speaker A and C use the discourse particle *shiolola ta* (don't you see?) before their main utterances. For speaker A, the particle captures the listener's attention since it asks the listener if he is seeing or not, before the respondent goes ahead to list of boys who were circumcised. In the second incident *shiolola ta* (you see) comes immediately before the interviewer comments that traditional circumcisions were different from modern ones.

The particle makes the listener to take note about the differences between modern and traditional initiations. These particles when produced, appeal to the listener to see and therefore his or her attention is captured before the speaker goes ahead to say what he intended to say.

Table 5: Summary of Pragmatic Functions of Particles Highlighting Hypothesis:

Discourse Particle	Function	Pragmatic effect
<i>Sasa</i> (now)	Turn initiator, temporal frame marker	Marks a shift toward problem/hypothesis discourse

<i>Khurie</i> (what can we do)	Interrogative particle	Frames the utterance as hypothetical; invites collaborative reasoning
<i>Ololanga</i> (you see)	Interrogative particle	Frames the utterance as hypothetical; invites collaborative reasoning
<i>Lenga</i> (see/look)	Turn initiator	Marks a shift toward problem

From a Discourse-Pragmatic Lens, CA Perspective Particles like *sasa* (now) manage turn-taking transitions, setting up a projectable slot for speculative or problem-solving discourse whereas RT Perspective: Particles foreground epistemic distance and cognitive relevance, signaling that the speaker is engaging in *inferential communication*—not stating facts but posing possibilities.

4.3.5 Holding the Floor and Keeping One's Turn

Cutting (2002) argued that holding the floor is a situation in which a participant is speaking in a discourse while the other participants wait for him to finish what he or she has to say. The other person is holding the floor.

To examine how discourse particles function in holding the floor and keeping one's turn in the interaction below from a discourse-pragmatic (disco-pragmatic) approach, we need to consider both Conversational Analysis (CA) mechanisms and Relevance Theory (RT) in relation to how meaning is co-constructed and turns are managed through discourse particles.

Repetition of temporal discourse particle “*bulano*” (‘nowadays’) in the example provided below functions in holding the floor, and also to create cohesion. Interlocutor N repeats the temporal discourse particle “*bulano*” (nowadays) four times. This repetition serves as a floor-holding strategy, signaling that the speaker has not yet completed their turn. Instead of yielding the floor after each clause, “*bulano*” (nowadays) is used to chain clauses, guiding the listener through a narrative progression.

From a CA viewpoint, *bulano* works to stall turn-yielding, allowing Interlocutor N to maintain control of the conversational floor. From an RT perspective, it also manages cognitive relevance by segmenting the information into accessible chunks tied to the present context of discussion.

Considering the use of contrastive discourse particle “*kho*” (‘so’ / emphatic contrast), it Functions to turn maintenance and in signaling elaboration. It occurs near the end of interlocutor N’s turn – “*kho abasiani...*” (*so boys...*). “*Kho*” (so) marks a pivot or elaboration within the speaker's own turn. It indicates that what follows is a clarification or emphasis, pre-empting any interruption by implying more is to come. From Disco-pragmatic perspective in CA, *kho* (so) helps maintain interactional coherence, showing the speaker is moving into a sub-explanation but in RT, it redirects the hearer's attention to an implicature or inference that the speaker finds important—possibly that the performance or role of boys is pivotal in understanding gendered play.

Also, the particle *kho* (so) delayed completion and ellipsis. It serves the role in strategic suspension. The utterance ends with an ellipsis: “*kho abasiani...*” (*so boys...*) — suggesting that interlocutor N either pauses strategically, inviting listener attention or feedback, or is interrupted, indicating the pressures of floor-sharing. Analyzing it from a Disco-pragmatic

view, it signals incomplete floor surrender, as the speaker maintains a sense of ownership of the turn, even in a trailing or suspended form.

Example in Interaction 21: (*Circumstance: the traditional sports and games are under discussion at the market place*)

Interlocutor M: Ne emibayo nachio chialinji chirie?

‘How were sports and games?’

Interlocutor N: Abana abasiani nabakhana balapimana tsingufu. bulano mulachesiana musaa

ne bulano muchesiane tsingufu bulano abakhana nabasiani bulano
mulachesiananga tsingufu kho abasiani...

‘Children used to play according to their gender whereby boys used to do wrestling and

now they could compete amongst themselves to see who won’

Interlocutor M: Abakhana banyala okhupa abasiani hasi?

‘Did the female gender outwit the male one?’

Table 6: Cumulative Role of Discourse Particles

Particle	Literal Meaning	Discourse Function	Pragmatic Effect

<i>Bulano</i>	‘nowadays’	Maintains cohesion and holds the floor	Structures information and delays floor-yielding
<i>Kho</i>	So	Emphasizes or pivots within a turn	Prevents interruption and signals continuation

From a disco-pragmatic approach, the use of “*bulano*” ‘nowadays’ and “*kho*” ‘so’ as contextual discourse particles serves critical functions in floor management. They help Interlocutor N hold the floor by: Establishing a temporal frame (*bulano*) ‘nowadays’ that delays closure, pivoting to reinforce or expand points (*kho*), ‘so’ discouraging interruptions, and Sustaining cognitive focus on ongoing content (RT) while managing turn structure (CA). This interplay showcases how discourse particles in Lutsotso are not fillers but interactional tools used strategically to retain control, guide interpretation, and shape participation.

4.3.6 To Disagree Politely

Song (2016) stated that there is no any conversation which can start and end without disagreeing with one another. The interlocutors hold different views and opinions concerning ideas or matter. For them to be able to disagree politely without hurting each other’s feelings, they have to employ discourse particles appropriately. Disagreeing politely enhances good rapport between the language users. Communication is made effective and efficient when these particles are correctly used in conversations. Cook (1983) observed that the discourse particles enhance good cooperation between the first and the second interlocutors and they remedy the challenge of appearing unfriendly.

In the interaction given below, the discourse particles play a crucial role in managing polite disagreement, aligning with Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, particularly in terms of mitigating *face-threatening acts (FTAs)*—specifically disagreement.

Example in Interaction 22: (Context: *The conversation is revolving around family matters*)

Speaker B: "*Bulano otushe okhumanya efwe shikhunyala okhumenya halala nabasatsa shiabenabo tawe.*"

‘**Now** you have to be aware that we cannot stay with such kind of husbands.’

Speaker D: *Kata kakhaba bahana ikhwe?*" ‘**Even if** they paid dowry?’

Speaker B: "*Nobulayi, khulamenya nebutswa omanyane obulwani shibuwetsanga ta.*"

Good, we will stay with them but you know wrangles never end.

The discourse particle, “***Bulano***” (‘now’) functions as a temporal and cognitive shift marker. “***Bulano***” (now) signals a shift to a reflective or evaluative stance. It marks the speaker’s move from reacting to a hypothetical (drinking husbands) to grounding their position in present-day realities.

From a politeness strategy, using “***bulano***,” (now) the speaker B *softens the onset of disagreement* by presenting it as an appeal to practical awareness rather than as a direct contradiction. This supports the negative face (the addressee’s desire not to be imposed upon) by packaging disagreement as socially reasonable or circumstantial.

The discourse particle: “***Kata***” (‘even if’) functions as a concessive particle. “***Kata***” ‘Even if’ introduces a hypothetical concession that reflects understanding of the opposing viewpoint. In politeness strategy is achieved by acknowledging a culturally important

practice (dowry), Speaker A is employing a positive politeness strategy—showing respect and solidarity while preparing to maintain her stance. It creates a *common ground* before reinforcing the counter-argument.

On the other hand, discourse particle "***Nobulayi***" ('good') functions as a Face-saving agreement marker: "***Nobulayi***" 'now' appears to concede, signaling agreement or acceptance—but it's *strategic and partial*. It's immediately followed by a pragmatic counterpoint (that problems will persist). This is a classic dis-preferred disagreement format in conversation analysis (CA): first agree to some extent, then provide the contrasting opinion. It protects positive face by showing that the speaker respects the prior input while maintaining her stance.

Discourse Particle: "***omanye***" ('you know') functions as a shared knowledge appeal. "***Omanye***" (you know) assumes common understanding, drawing on mutual cultural or experiential knowledge. This functions as a solidarity device, invoking a sense of shared wisdom. It downplays the disagreement by implying that both parties already *know* the reality. This helps preserve positive face, showing that the speaker values the hearer's understanding and insight.

Table 7: Summary of Pragmatic-Politeness Work Done by Particles:

Discourse Particle	Pragmatic Function	Politeness Theory Role
<i>Bulano</i> ('now')	Reframes the disagreement as rational and contextual	Mitigates imposition (negative face)

<i>Kata</i> ('even if')	Concedes culturally sensitive point before disagreement	Builds solidarity (positive face)
<i>Nobulayi</i> ('good')	Softens disagreement by appearing to agree first	Dis-preferred turn format, saves face
<i>Omany</i> e ('you know')	Appeals to shared knowledge	Invokes common ground (positive face)

From a disco-pragmatic approach, the discourse particles in this Lutsotso interaction frame disagreement as cooperative and culturally sensitive, using indirectness, shared reasoning, and concessive strategies. These particles mediate interpersonal tension, helping interlocutors disagree without face loss, maintaining harmony and group cohesion, especially in emotionally charged topics like marriage and gender roles.

4.4 Examining How Discourse Particles Account for Contextual Meaning in Lutsotso Interactions.

Available researches demonstrate that discourse particles have pragmatic functions. It is by looking at the pragmatic roles of particles that we can be able to see how context can be applied. Yus, (2012), for instance asserted that features of the rules governing the use of a particular language may or may not limit the willful explication of what is uttered by auditors. This implies that, for auditors to explicate what is uttered, they need to possess capability to reach accessibility to the needed milieu that can be adjusted in order to intensify explication of elucidation. For auditors to extrapolate what is spoken relating to conscious mental processes, then how language rules are organized organization of the plays a vital duty.

Sperber and Wilson (1995) assert that an input can be relevant when positive cognitive effects are generated by the hearer and the processing effort is reduced. Cognitive effects inform the hearer how he or she views the world. Sperber and Wilson (ibid) further note that, the hearer's cognitive environment influences his or her environment and helps the hearer determine the kind of cognitive effects to be derived.

The changes in the processes of encoding, storing and manipulating information in the mind could build up the presuppositions which are in existence, establish suppositions by enfeebling or contradicting them which may lead to its removal. During communication, the surrounding environment used by the speaker changes in diverse utterances. The new information given by the speaker creates cognitive effects that the hearer uses the new information to infer by connecting with the existing information. The auditors put in use their encyclopaedic knowledge to help making assumptions. The preceding section of what is said provides relevant environment for the understanding of the section that follows.

As mentioned above, the understanding of discourse particles cannot be repressed in its semantic meaning. Their pragmatic functions will not be well realized until they are put into a certain context. In diverse contexts and different pragmatic presuppositions, discourse particles in conversations have different pragmatic functions. In the following analysis, the pragmatic functions of the discourse particles *omanye* and *obulayi* in Lutsotso conversations are discussed based on the framework of Relevance Theory, and from the perspective of conversational interaction and cognitive inference. The particular instances for each and every function from conversations are picked up and analysed below.

4.4.1 Omanyane as a Discourse Information Modification Particle

Looking at it from the perspective of the collected data, *omanye* ‘you need to know’ can enhance hinting the changes of the discourse information, including serving as information repair particle, addition particle and insufficiency particle.

The process of generating a spoken discourse is dynamic, that is, it keeps on changing. The purpose of the auditors is to link the new information and their personal information together, and then find the relevant information generated from the discourse spoken discourse and the cognitive context. The speaker will employ discourse particles and other linguistic methods to guide the auditor’s attentiveness, which can increase the impact of the discourse context in order to minimise the time for the auditor to comprehend the utterance. *Omany*e ‘you need to know’, sometimes will lead a discourse section that is different from the previous meaning , and it is in order to reveal the information that has not been formerly mentioned , suggested and estimated, which does not comply with the information appeared in the subsequent utterance or will change or amend the previous utterance. The discourse particle *omanye* ‘you need to know’ is transitional in meaning in such circumstances. Consider the following instances below:

Example in Interaction 23: (Circumstance: *The young people are having a discussion about the African Cup of Nations*)

Interlocutor W: Abandu abanji bayanza okhulola omupira kwa afukoni. Omany omupira kwa mukenya kata shikuli omulayi ta.

Interlocutor X: Ne toto.

‘And by the way’

‘So many people like watching African Cup of Nations. You need to know that Kenyan football is not even good.

In the instance provide above, the information preceding the discourse particle *omanye* ‘you need to know’ does not appear in the initial utterance. The speaker informs the auditor that people like watching African Cup of Nations. But in the final section, he changes the information formed he came up with in the beginning and he expresses the message that Kenyan football is not really good. The two sections are mutually exclusive to each other, and in order to help the auditor be able to follow his transition, he employs the discourse particle *omanye* ‘you need to know’ to inform the auditor to merge the cognitive context with his utterance together and hence, forms an opposite fact in the mind of the auditor. Interlocutor W employs the discourse particle *omanye* ‘you need to know’ as a particle to bridge the opposite information in the context in order to guide the auditor to transfer her attentiveness onto the latter information.

Example in Interaction 24: (Circumstance: Teachers are discussing about the new taxes imposed on them by the Kenya Kwanza government)

Interlocutor Y: *Amakhuwa ka Ruto kokhutosia obushuru shikalikho amalayi nahatutu ta, omanyeh kahumisinjia abandu obubii sana.*

‘The issue of Ruto imposing taxes on people is not at all, they are oppressing so badly.

The second instance reveals that the interlocutor Y, at the beginning says that the issue of Ruto imposing taxation on people is not good at all, but his following utterance passes across the information that what he is doing is really oppressing people so badly. He may have forgotten to tell the impact that taxation is having on people, so he attempts to add the latter

utterance, which is amendment of the previous. The discourse particle used links two sections together in order to correct the speaker's information or to bring to remembrance the extra information.

Example in Interaction 24: (Circumstance: *The conversation is revolving around the health of the smokers*)

Interlocutor N: *Noreba omundu wukhwesanga indaba amarebo kama, 'Okhwesanga indaba? Owuhulilanga obutsuni mushishienje? Kakhabanga olareba amarebo buliiyetsa nabole mbu ta, ne lichibu nilili mbu hee, omanyee, okhumala obwiyangu bwo kushida shinga eyeneyo shibuli obulayi ta.*

'If you ask a smoker questions like, "Do you smoke? Do you have abdominal pain? If you ask

critical questions at every visit and the answer is no, when the answer is yes, you need to know, to spend your time is not good at all'.

Interlocutor X: *Kata sie shienjamanga ta.*

'I too do not like it'.

Looking at the instance provide above, it clear that interlocutor N confidently believed that the response to the questions would be no, but later, he put forward an assumption that the response would be yes, which did not comply with what believed. If there was no further repair for his utterance, the auditor would find it very difficult to interpret his words. In order to avoid such outcome, the discourse particle *omanyee* 'you know' to introduce the

information that more problems would be realized if the response was yes, which again made the auditor to come to the relevance that the response is ‘no’.

4.4.2 Discourse particle Omanyé ‘you need to know’ as a Turn Shifting Particle

In any communication, if all the interlocutors can express overlapping during conversation process, the continuation of the communication will not be near possibility. Communication is a process that the parties involved constantly keep shifting their communicative roles. Turn-taking is the mechanism to decide which one should give his or her contribution and which should do the auditioning (Guo, 2023:87). In Lutsotso conversations, it is shown that the discourse particle omanyé ‘you need to know’ has a monitoring role on communication turn. In particular, it plays the function of governing in the aspect of floor-biding, floor-maintaining and floor-relinquishing. It is one of the discourse particles that are employed by interlocutors during their conversation. It should be noted that the above-mentioned particle occupies the initial position of the discourse to indicate the aim of the speaker of saying something when it is applied in the biding process of the floor.

Example in Interaction 25: (Circumstance: *The informants are conversing about the introduction of technology in schools*)

Interlocutor G: *Amakhuwa katsitekiniloji...*

‘These technological issues...’

Interlocutor T: **Omanyé**, *amakhuwa ka tsitekinoloji mutsisukuli katsitsanga akhurera obukalukhani obukhongo sana.*

‘You need to know, all of these technologies in schools are going to play a very big role.’

In the instance above, we can find the “cuts in” movement of the speaker, which demonstrates that the speaker T bids the floor during the conversation. If an abrupt interjection is put into the utterance of the other side in the communication, that will be rude and annoying. So, to make the floor-bidding process more easily and peacefully, speakers will tend to choose discourse particles as an introduction for their upcoming utterances. In the instance above, interlocutor T puts the discourse particle *omanye* ‘you need to know’ in the front of his utterances and suggests that he is going to talk.

When discourse particles *omanye* ‘you need to know’ is employed in the maintaining of the floor process, it is usually placed in the middle of a discourse. It works as a tool for utterance delaying and helps to earn enough time for the speaker to organize his or her utterance behind it. In such circumstance, *omanye* ‘you need to know’ is a particle which is used to tell the auditor that the current utterance is not yet over. It is a key way of holding the turn that is in existence.

4.4.3 *Omany* ‘you need to know’ as an Attitude Particle

It is believed in a general manner by the linguists that discourse particles do not affect the truth condition of spoken discourse, but can reveal the attitudes or emotions towards the contents of proposition. Guo (2013) believes that the contexts in front of and behind discourse particles, and for our case is *omanye* ‘you need to know’, have a close connection and it can reflect the agreeing attitude, positive reaction or high emotion. In Lutsotso conversations, *omanye* ‘you need to know’ is usually connected with the attitude of the one speaking, though it can also be connected with rejection, opposition and even denial. Look at the conversation below for illustration:

Example in Interaction 26: (Circumstance: *The informants are discussing on the issue of misappropriation of funds by one of them*)

Interlocutor F: *Watsiririsia amakhuwa ka kobukora?*

‘Did you foster misuse of our funds?’

Interlocutor R: *Shindarumishila amang’ondo obubii tawe. Khwali, **omanye**, nikhwenyanga okhubebarira.*

‘I did not use your money in the wrong way. We wanted, you need to know, to explain to you.’

In the conversation above, the interlocutor F is asking interlocutor R if he misused their funds, which is a bit difficult for him to provide an honest answer. Interlocutor R will find himself in a problem if he admits the plain truth, so he goes ahead to give an extra sentence which is just an excuse. He decides to employ the discourse particle, **omanye** ‘you need to know’ to get rid of his feeling by guiding the interlocutor F to his excuse slowly because he is aware of embarrassment, he will experience by making it.

4.4.4 *Omany*e ‘you need to know’ as a Mitigator Particle.

Both interlocutors in any verbal communication have to make efforts of maintaining harmonious interpersonal relationships, that is, making sure that they express politeness. The best way to express it is by considering some basic measures of giving to the speakers themselves or the other party. Many languages have face threatening behavior possibility. Hence, in the verbal communication, interlocutors will prefer certain means to meet the need

of face-saving, and their proper use can play a role in personal regulation. In Lutsotso conversations, the discourse particle *omanye* ‘you need to know’ does this work effectively.

The occurrence of the opinions of the or views of the speaker during verbal communication cannot fail to contradict with the auditor’s, or the request of one side being rejected by the other, or the utterance of the speaker being offensive. These circumstances mean that the interlocutors’ faces will threaten each other, then people have to make efforts to ease the intensity of the threats in consideration of politeness and interpersonal relationship. Looking at the discourse particle keenly, it is quite clear that it can be used to lower the degree of face-threatening from the perspective of Relevance Theory.

Example in Interaction 34: (Circumstance: The *informants are having a conversation revolving around the challenges they normally face at the place of work*)

Interlocutor S: Omwaka kuwere, khwali nende abandu betsa nibabola, “*Omany*e, shikhulolanga shimukholanga hano ta.” Shibalola ikasi yefu ta.

‘Last year, we had folks who came up and said, “You need to know, we did not see what you are doing here.” They did not see what we had done.

By just analysing that conversation, the interlocutor is talking about their predicament last year. Most people thought that they were not doing anything serious. The context assumption of them was irrelevant to the cognition of the speaker, so they needed to find a way to bridge this gap. The use of the discourse particle *omanye* ‘you need to know’ adjusted the interpersonal relationship that would possibly be destroyed by the words uttered by the speakers.

4.4.5 *Omany*e ‘you need to know as an Advising Particle.

The intentions of the use of discourse particles by speakers can be vary during communication process. Looking at the sections that have been analysed above, you will be able to realize that information repair or change, communication turn taking, expression of the speaker's attitudes and feelings, and face-threatening mitigation. And sometimes, in the communication, the speaker tries to persuade or give some suggestions to the auditor. Providing direct advice may give an impression of arrogance and offence. In another circumstance, when the suggestion provided to the auditor fails to adhere to the thoughts, peradventure the speakers will make the conversation unappealing and, in order to avoid such circumstances, the speaker normally will apply some unique methodologies to express their pieces of advice or convince the auditor, and from the perspective of Relevance Theory, the discourse particles can be a sign of implication from the auditor to make some adjustments of his or her cognitive assumptions. The discourse particle *omanye* 'you need to know' has such role basing on the observation of the analysis.

Example in Interaction 26: (Circumstance: The conversation is about slow movement experienced by the WECOHAS group)

Interlocutor D: *Abemilisi ba WECOHAS benyekha batushile abandu abanji sana.*

'The WECOHAS leaders should reach many people'

Interlocutor E: *Ndakahamanyilekhotsa mbu yiyitsa okhukhonya abandu ta, shindakhenjirekhomo ta-omanye, abemilisi befu shibakhola munjira inayi ta.*

If I had I known that WECOHAS was not going to benefit people, I would not have joined-you

need to know that the leaders failed to do what was required of them.

The background of that conversation is that WECOHAS failed and so many people were not reached because of poor leadership that was in operation. The discourse particle *omanye* ‘you need to know’ was chosen by interlocutor E to guide the interlocutor D to his intention that the leaders were supposed to do as per the requirements of the team.

4.5 Assessing the Context to Which the Relevance Theory Accounts for Discourse Particles in Lutsotso Interactions.

To assess the context to which Relevance Theory (RT) accounts for discourse particles in Lutsotso interactions from a disco-pragmatic approach, we must explore the interplay between Relevance Theory (RT) – particularly its concern with cognitive effects and processing effort, Discourse pragmatics – especially how discourse particles operate in natural conversation, and Lutsotso discourse particles – as markers of tone, stance, turn-taking, topic management, etc.

Theory argues that communication involves not just encoding and decoding, but *ostensive-inferential* processes. Also, this theory argues that every utterance conveys explicit (what is said) and implicit (what is meant) information. Listeners seek optimal relevance: enough cognitive effects (e.g., new insights, strengthened assumptions) with least processing effort.

Discourse particles help optimize relevance by guiding interpretive paths, highlighting speaker intentions, and modulating cognitive effort for the hearer. The discourse-pragmatic (disco-pragmatic) approach focuses on the interactional functions of language, like: turn management, topic control, mitigation of disagreement, engagement cues, and focus management

Discourse particles in Lutsotso—such as ***bulano*** ‘nowadays’, *haya* ‘okay’, *kho* ‘so’, *wulila* ‘listen’, *sasa* ‘now’, —play key roles in these functions. Below are examples of discourse particles in Lutsotso analyzed through RT and a disco-pragmatic lens.

Example in Interaction 27: (Context: *The interactants are conversing about how the world has rotten and how these current days are totally different from the former days.*)

Speaker A: ***Bulano*** *eshialo shikalukhana. Shishiri shinga tsinanga tsiefu ta. ‘Nowadays, the world has changed. It’s not like in our days.’*

Speaker B: *Nobulamba mwanawefu.* ‘It is true my brother’

The RT function of the contextual discourse particle- ***bulano*** ‘*nowadays*’- narrows the temporal context and primes the hearer for contrastive or evaluative content and signals relevance by cueing temporal proximity and social commentary. From the Disco-pragmatic function of topic continuation with a framing particle, and evaluative stance embedded in temporal framing is achieved. This ensures hearer B processes speaker’s moral framing with *reduced processing effort*.

Let us consider another contextual discourse particle. The contextual discourse particle “***Haya***” – ‘Okay’ / ‘Well then’, in the example provided below, from the RT perspective, functions to signal transition relevance. It is used by speaker A to indicate that the upcoming utterance holds relevant implications or action points.

Example in Interaction 28: (Context: *The interactants are discussing about what happens during funeral ceremonies.*)

Speaker A: **Haya**, *nomanyile mbu ishimiyanga khu arufwo. 'Okay, so you realized that they were praising him at the funeral.'*

Speaker B: *Khane wesi olutsi?* 'You also saw it?'

Speaker A: **Wulila**, *nende oloma nende olondakho, tawe. 'Listen', with this issue and others like it, no.'*

From the Disco-pragmatic function, the particle – '**haya**' 'okay'- is used by speaker A to reclaim the floor or introduce a response. It also frames the next move as contextually appropriate and relevant to prior discourse. It helps the listener (speaker B) to interpret speaker A's intent without much inferential load.

Looking at the example of interaction provided above, speaker A employs the contextual discourse particle- "**Wulila**" 'Listen'-, which serves RT function as an ostensive cue that marks speaker A's intent to highlight cognitive effects. Speaker A also employs it to attract the attention of speaker B to a significant or corrective move. From a Disco-pragmatic function, it serves as turn-initiation and emphasis marker. In addition, it helps anchor hearer's (speaker B's) attention, managing shared cognitive environment, and to imply upcoming utterance carries high relevance and weight.

Consider another contextual discourse particle in Lutsotso interactions: "**Kho**" – 'So' in the example given below:

Example in Interaction 29: (*Context: The interactants are discussing about the welfare of the child*)

Speaker X: **Kho**, *omwana wo aliarie? 'So, how is your child doing?'*

Speaker T: *Nomulamu tsa hatiti*. ‘He is fairly fine’

Looking keenly at the interaction provided above, one will realize that the contextual discourse particle- “***kho*** ‘so’” serves the RT function by speaker X to introduces inferential links to earlier information and to also signal a contextual implication is being drawn.

From the perspective of Disco-pragmatic function, the particle ***kho*** ‘so’ is employed by speaker X to manage topic shift while maintaining relevance. It also invites relational inference, assuming shared knowledge-about the health of the child- and also optimizes processing by making inferential link explicit.

Let us look at another contextual discourse particle in Lutsotso interactions (“**Sasa**” – ‘**Now**’ / ‘**Well now**’).

Example in Interaction 30 (Context: *The discussion is all about theft cases in the community*)

Speaker A: ***Sasa***, *khulakhola khurie khupungusie obwifi?* ‘Now, what can we do to reduce theft cases?’

Speaker T: *Abemilisi ba nyumba kumi bahenjelesie oubula eshipande atirwe.* ‘The nyumba kumi leaders should arrest those people that have no ID’s’

In the interaction above, the interactant A employs the contextual discourse particle- ‘**sasa**’ ‘now’ in order to orient the hearer (interactant T) to a problem space or a concern about theft cases. It serves as cues a procedural relevance marker: “Here’s something to address.” From a Disco-pragmatic approach, it functions to establishes a shift to problem-solving frame and

the hearer (interactant T) is led to interpret speaker’s (interactant A’s) utterance as action-oriented and urgent.

Table 8: Summary of How RT Accounts for Lutsotso Discourse Particles

Discourse Particle	RT Function	Disco-Pragmatic Function	Cognitive Effect
<i>Bulano</i>	Temporal cue, relevance filter	Frames present-day vs. past	Highlights evaluative stance
Haya	Turn transition, relevance optimizer	Introduces response or new action	Marks coherent progression
Wulila	Ostensive cue, attention attractor	Takes floor emphatically	Emphasizes importance
Kho	Inferential link marker	Topic shift or summarizing	Guides inferential path
Sasa	Contextual anchor	Focuses on present problem	Triggers pragmatic inference

Relevance Theory offers a robust cognitive-pragmatic explanation for the use of discourse particles in Lutsotso. It shows that: particles manage processing effort and cognitive effects, speakers use them to signal relevance, topic boundaries, stance, or turn-taking intentions,

and in lutsotso conversational norms, these particles are *interactional strategies* that optimize communication through inferential efficiency and pragmatic coherence. Thus, RT accounts well for the interpretive and interactive roles of discourse particles when combined with a disco-pragmatic perspective.

4.5 Summary to the Chapter

This chapter explored the role of discourse particles in Lutsotso—a dialect of the Luhya language—focusing on their pragmatic functions, their ability to convey contextual meaning, and how Relevance Theory accounts for their usage within a discourse-pragmatic (disco-pragmatic) approach. In this chapter discourse particles have been identified from conversations in Lutsotso. It has been established that the discourse particles can be easily identified following the right procedure. The discourse particles are distributed in the utterances of the speakers where they occur in initial and final positions of the move and exchange. In this chapter it has been established that discourse particles have functions that they serve in the conversations. The functions include making the conversations coherent, enhancing an interpersonal relationship among the interlocutors.

This chapter also addressed discourse particles in relation to the principles of relevance theory. The two principles are the cognitive and the communicative principles. Speakers therefore, use ostensive communication so as to maximize relevance. Discourse particles are used by the speaker evidently and when communication is apparent, the extra mental resources to process information in adverse conditions put into use is not so much and the greater effects of conscious intellectual activity. Discourse particles lead auditors in the illative process by restricting the auditors' elucidation towards the speaker's sense. The

pragmatic roles conveyed supply confirmation that DPs in conversations promote productive information exchange in the middle of interlocutors.

CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The section systematically provides outcomes which describe the findings of the study as per the objectives under sub-section 5.2. The research questions are answered based on the findings. It also presents conclusions, related to the findings of the previous studies, under sub-section 5.3. The also presents, under sub-section 5.4, the recommendations, and finally, suggestions for further studies.

5.2 Findings

The study's key objectives were to explore the pragmatic functions of discourse particles in Lutsotso Interactions from a Disco-pragmatic approach; to examine how Discourse Particles Account for Contextual Meaning in Lutsotso Interactions, and to Assess the Context to Which the Relevance Theory Accounts for Discourse Particles in Lutsotso Interactions from a disco-pragmatic approach.

The study revealed several key findings on how discourse particles operate within Lutsotso conversations, focusing on their pragmatic functions as observed through a disco-pragmatic lens—that is, combining discourse analysis (DA), conversation analysis (CA), and relevance theory (RT): First, it was clearly established from the analysis that Discourse particles in Lutsotso are non-truth-conditional elements that crucially structure spoken interactions.

They perform key pragmatic functions such as: Turn management by the use of particles like *haya* ('okay') and *kho* ('so') are used to initiate or yield turns, avoid overlaps, and introduce new topics or phases in conversation.

Particles like “*tawe*” (not really/you know) and “*lakini*” (but) were employed to soften disagreement, express hesitation, or mitigate face-threatening acts, thereby aligning with Brown and Levinson’s Politeness Theory. These particles helped speakers to disagree politely, signal empathy or caution, or distance themselves from a potentially controversial stance. They are employed to enhance politeness and face management by the employment of particles such as *omanye* (‘you know’). They help speakers maintain positive and negative face, especially in disagreement, mitigation, or refusal.

Moreover, they highlight hypothesis and evaluation by employing particles like *sasa* (‘now’) and *mbu* (‘that’) introduce epistemic positioning, suggesting speculation or highlighting shared assumptions, and finally, they help in capturing the attention and engagement whereby particles such as *wulila* (‘listen’) are used to regain floor control, express emphasis, or signal shifts in cognitive framing. These particles are not merely fillers; they are interactional tools that help navigate meaning, relationship, and coherence in discourse. This reflects their pragmatic function in maintaining conversational structure and avoiding overlap or interruptions, consistent with conversation analytic principles.

The study observed that particles such as “*wulila*” (listen) and “*bulano*” (nowadays) served the purpose of drawing the listener’s attention, highlighting information, or indicating a thematic shift. These particles were particularly useful in Framing hypotheses, Announcing contrast, or Re-engaging disengaged listeners. They performed the pragmatic function of

foregrounding speaker intentions and guiding hearer inference, aligning with Relevance Theory's principles of optimal relevance.

Discourse particles also played a crucial role in shifting topics or anchoring contributions within a broader thematic context. For instance, “*Lakini*” (but) introduced contrastive shifts, “*Sasa*” (now) or “*bulano*” (these days) established temporal relevance, and Particles often acted as coherence markers, maintaining the unity of discourse.

Particles were also found to encode speaker attitude, evaluation, and personal stance. For example: “*Kata*” (even) indicated surprise or emphasis, and “*Mbu*” (so you say/you mean) reflected epistemic distance or skepticism.

This highlighted how discourse particles function beyond grammar—they indexed speaker identity, position, and interpersonal alignment.

In overall conclusion, the study concluded that discourse particles in Lutsotso are pragmatically multifunctional. They are crucial for: managing interactional flow, enhancing cooperative communication, structuring discourse, and facilitating interpretation of meaning-in-context. Their meaning is deeply context-dependent, requiring a disco-pragmatic approach for accurate interpretation. The study affirms that discourse particles are not fillers, but meaningful pragmatic tools that mediate the social and cognitive dimensions of communication.

The study also set out to investigate how discourse particles in Lutsotso contribute to the construction of meaning within specific interactional contexts. Anchored in the disco-pragmatic approach—which integrates discourse analysis and pragmatics—the research revealed that discourse particles in Lutsotso are not arbitrary fillers, but serve functional

roles in shaping speaker intentions, managing conversational flow, and guiding listener interpretation within social contexts.

It was found out that discourse particles in Lutsotso encode the speaker's stance or attitude toward the proposition or interlocutor. For example, particles such as "*haya*" ('okay') and "*basi*" ('so/then') signal shifts in stance—either acceptance, closure, or transition. These particles help the listener interpret not just what is being said, but *how* it is meant. The particles serve to signal turn management strategies. For instance, "*eh*", "*haya*" 'okay', and "*basi*" 'so/then' " indicate readiness to yield or take the floor. This regulates interactional coherence and prevents overlaps or interruptions, especially in group conversations.

The study revealed that contextual particles work in tandem with Relevance Theory by drawing the listener's attention to what the speaker considers important or contextually salient. Particles like "*sasa*" ('now') or "*lakini*" ('but') pragmatically mark shifts in topic or contrast, thus guiding cognitive processing of the discourse content.

To add on that, the study showed that discourse particles also function in the realm of politeness and face management. For instance, the use of softeners such as "*kama*" ('like/as if') allows speakers to present hypotheses or disagreements politely. These particles ensure that interpersonal rapport is maintained during potentially face-threatening acts. Also, these particles ensure topical cohesion by signaling continuation or elaboration ("*basi*" 'okay', "*ne*" 'again', "*bulano*" 'nowadays'). They cue the listener that the speaker is building upon an earlier point, thus helping maintain discourse coherence within changing contexts.

The key finding was context sensitivity and dynamic interpretation of these contextual discourse particles, i.e., the interpretation of particles is context-dependent. The same

particle may imply acceptance, continuation, disagreement, or topic shift depending on intonation, setting, and interactional goals. This underscores the dynamic interplay between linguistic form and socio-pragmatic context in Lutsotso communication.

The study also assessed how Relevance Theory can explain the use and interpretation of discourse particles in Lutsotso conversations, focusing on how these particles guide meaning within context. The disco-pragmatic approach (a blend of discourse and pragmatic analysis) emphasizes the speaker-hearer interaction, contextual cues, and communicative intentions.

Relevance Theory posits that communication is guided by the search for *optimal relevance*, where the listener expects enough contextual effects with minimal processing effort. In Lutsotso Discourse particles like “*bulano*” (nowadays), “*haya*” (okay), and “*nee*” (and/so) are used to highlight what is relevant at that moment in interaction. These particles guide the hearer to interpret the speaker's utterance with the intended contextual frame—whether emphasizing contrast, change, or alignment with shared knowledge.

The study revealed that Discourse particles in Lutsotso create cognitive effects—interpretive outcomes that help the hearer grasp implicatures (indirectly communicated meanings). Particles like “*tawe*” (negation/emphasis) help clarify a speaker's stance or refusal, often softening disagreement or emphasizing rejection, and that listeners infer meanings beyond the literal, relying on contextual relevance.

It also came out clearly that discourse particles are relevance triggers, i.e., Some particles function to activate or reset contextual frames—alerting the hearer to a new topic, adjustment, or hypothesis. Still on the same, minimizing processing effort is made possible through familiar particles. Relevance Theory emphasizes that communication aims for

maximum effect with minimal effort. Lutsotso discourse particles, being frequent and socially shared, reduce the processing burden: as hearers recognize the particles' functions instantly based on prior usage patterns, and this also enables quick comprehension of speaker intention, whether persuasive, explanatory, or evaluative.

Furthermore, the study found out that Relevance is partly derived from shared assumptions. Lutsotso particles rely heavily on cultural context, group norms, and shared understanding for relevance to be effective. For instance, “*nee*” (so/and) often connects arguments or thoughts assumed to be mutually known, and without this shared cognitive environment, the relevance of certain particles could be lost or misinterpreted.

Table 9: Summary of Key Findings:

Aspect	Finding
Relevance signaling	Particles direct hearer to interpret utterance in a contextually appropriate way.
Cognitive effects	Particles enable inference of intentions, attitudes, or social meanings
Framing and coherence	Particles initiate, maintain, or close conversational moves for clarity.
Effort reduction	Familiar particles streamline comprehension, aiding relevance
Cultural grounding	Particles derive much of their relevance from shared socio-cultural assumptions

The findings show that Relevance Theory effectively accounts for how discourse particles function in Lutsotso interactions. These particles are not just fillers—they are strategic tools for achieving relevance, managing conversation flow, expressing attitudes, and reinforcing cultural values. Through a disco-pragmatic lens, we see that relevance is co-constructed through both linguistic form and social context. The findings also demonstrate that discourse particles in Lutsotso are contextually motivated and pragmatically loaded. Through a disco-pragmatic lens, they emerge as essential tools for encoding intention, managing interactional structure, and ensuring relevance in social communication. Their usage is deeply tied to cultural norms, cognitive expectations, and interactional goals, highlighting the centrality of contextual interpretation in understanding meaning in natural discourse.

The study of Lutsotso discourse particles from a disco-pragmatic and relevance-theoretic perspective reveals the complex, functional, and culturally anchored nature of these linguistic tools. Implementing the above recommendations will not only advance academic understanding but also strengthen language preservation, teaching, and intercultural communication in the Lutsotso-speaking community.

From the study, it was also found out that contextual meaning in Lutsotso discourse is deeply embedded in how discourse particles operate across sequential, social, and cognitive dimensions. In Sequential context, particles cue interlocutors to shifts in topic, thematic boundaries (*haya*), or reiteration (*bulano* – ‘nowadays’). In social context, Discourse particles encode status negotiation, solidarity, disagreement, or alignment, reflecting culturally grounded norms of interaction. And in Cognitive context, particles guide hearers’ inferencing, drawing attention to relevance, shared knowledge, or underlying assumptions (e.g., *mbu* indicating reported speech or indirect assertion).

Thus, the meaning of a particle is not fixed but interpreted relative to the ongoing interaction, speaker intent, and listener processing.

Relevance Theory (RT)—as developed by Sperber and Wilson—offers a useful cognitive framework for understanding how discourse particles in Lutsotso operate to maximize contextual effects while minimizing processing effort. Under optimal relevance, particles help the speaker guide the listener to intended implicatures (unstated but inferred meanings), such as politeness, irony, or emphasis. In the dimension of procedural meaning, any particles in Lutsotso encode procedural instructions rather than propositional content—telling the hearer how to interpret the utterance (e.g., *tawe* signaling mitigation). Taking the Cognitive environments, particles signal shared or assumed knowledge, helping to reduce ambiguity and steer interpretation within a specific socio-cultural frame, and in the aspect of Discourse coherence through RT, particles are seen as managing the relevance of utterances, clarifying speaker intentions and promoting smooth transitions between conversational contributions.

The Relevance-Theoretic model aligns well with disco-pragmatic analysis, offering insight into both surface-level interactional patterns and deep-level inferential processes in Lutsotso dialogue. Discourse particles in Lutsotso are powerful pragmatic tools that serve context-sensitive functions in conversation. From structuring talk and managing turns, to marking evaluation, politeness, and inference, their usage is deeply anchored in discourse and cultural norms. When viewed through the lens of Relevance Theory, their contribution to cognitive processing and communicative efficiency becomes even clearer. A disco-pragmatic approach thus provides a comprehensive understanding of how meaning is negotiated and maintained in Lutsotso social interactions.

Through the lens of Relevance Theory and a discourse-pragmatic approach, it was demonstrated that Lutsotso speakers use discourse particles to guide interpretation, highlight cognitive relevance, and manage face concerns. The use of these particles facilitates efficient communication by lowering processing effort and enhancing mutual understanding, consistent with the principles of ostensive-inferential communication.

5.3 Conclusions

Based on the examination of contextual discourse particles in Lutsotso interactions, guided by the stated objectives, the following conclusions can be drawn, namely: Discourse particles in serve crucial pragmatic roles that contribute significantly to the flow, organization, and interpretation of interactional meaning. From a discourse-pragmatic approach, it is concluded that turn-taking management is facilitated by particles which signal readiness to speak, yield a turn, or acknowledge another speaker, attention regulation is achieved using particles which foreground upcoming information or re-engage listeners' focus, particles help express speaker attitudes (e.g., doubt, emphasis, empathy these they support politeness strategies, such as softening disagreement or hedging responses, thus helping maintain interpersonal harmony in interaction, and some particles mark the beginning or end of discourse units, acting as boundary markers or discourse initiators, enhancing structural coherence.

Contextual meaning in any conversation is not always carried by lexical content alone—discourse particles enrich interpretation based on shared situational and cultural knowledge. Key conclusions include: The same particle may serve different meanings depending on context—e.g., *basi* might indicate resignation, conclusion, or continuity depending on the preceding statement and intonation. These particles contribute to inferencing and

implicature, by triggering assumptions, background knowledge, or highlighting contrasts not explicitly stated, Cultural norms, such as deference, group solidarity, or respectful disagreement, shape the usage and interpretation of these particles, and Contextual usage often helps listeners disambiguate speaker intention, especially in face-threatening or emotionally sensitive exchanges.

When assessed through the lens of Relevance Theory, discourse particles can be understood as procedural indicators that guide hearers toward intended meaning by narrowing interpretive effort. The following conclusions emerge, Discourse particles serve as relevance markers, cueing the hearer on how to process the utterance—whether to expect elaboration, contrast, or inference. Also, many particles (e.g., *bulano* “nowadays”, *sasa* “now”) help minimize cognitive effort by anchoring the utterance to specific temporal, attitudinal, or epistemic frames. Particles constrain the contextual assumptions activated during interpretation, increasing the relevance of the speaker’s contribution within a given social or conversational context.

Furthermore, Relevance Theory effectively explains why speakers choose certain particles—they facilitate optimal relevance by balancing processing cost and cognitive effect. However, Relevance Theory alone does not fully account for culturally embedded functions of particles (e.g., politeness, social hierarchy), hence the need for the discourse-pragmatic approach to complement it.

Discourse particles in interactions are more than filler elements; they are core components of meaning-making, deeply embedded in both linguistic and socio-cultural interactional practices. Their pragmatic functions, contextual meanings, and cognitive relevance underscore their centrality in effective communication. A combined discourse-pragmatic

and Relevance-Theoretic approach provides a comprehensive understanding of how these particles operate in real-life conversations.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the examination of contextual discourse particles in Lutsotso interactions from a disco-pragmatic approach, and in line with the three stated objectives, several well-grounded recommendations can be made. These recommendations are both academic and practical, targeting linguistic researchers, educators, and community language preservation stakeholders.

1. Promote In-depth Documentation and Description of Lutsotso Discourse Particles.

From the exploration of the pragmatic functions of discourse particles in Lutsotso, it is evident that these particles perform significant roles such as turn-taking, emphasis, politeness, expressing doubt, managing disagreement, highlighting hypotheses, and contextual anchoring. However, many of these particles are undocumented in formal grammar.

Linguists and language researchers should prioritize compiling comprehensive documentation of Lutsotso discourse particles, including their phonological forms, syntactic positions, pragmatic functions, and contextual meanings. This documentation should include a corpus of naturally occurring conversations for reference.

2. Integrate Discourse Particle Analysis into Lutsotso Language Teaching and Curriculum

The study revealed that discourse particles contribute heavily to contextual meaning and interpersonal understanding in conversations. This includes their use in politeness strategies, signaling relevance, and clarifying speaker intent.

Language instructors and curriculum developers should incorporate discourse particle use into classroom instruction and learning materials. Exercises should focus on both form and function, helping learners to understand how particles shape meaning within specific social and contextual settings.

3. Encourage Pragmatic and Discourse-based Approaches in Lutsotso Linguistic Studies

Discourse particles were shown to be best understood not merely at the sentence level but through their pragmatic functions across extended discourse. The disco-pragmatic approach offers insights that syntactic or semantic approaches alone may overlook.

Future studies of Lutsotso should adopt and further refine the disco-pragmatic framework to analyze other aspects of communication such as narratives, rituals, or institutional talk. Researchers should consider multi-modal data (e.g., intonation, gestures) that interact with particle use.

4. Apply Relevance Theory in Interpreting Discourse Particles Contextually

Findings from the third objective showed that **Relevance Theory** successfully accounts for how speakers use discourse particles to guide hearers' attention to relevant assumptions, inferential processes, and contextual implications. Language analysts and educators should use Relevance Theory to better understand the inferential roles of particles in Lutsotso, especially in ambiguous or multi-layered communication. Comparative studies with other

Bantu languages should be encouraged to see if similar inferential patterns exist and how they manifest in discourse particle usage.

5. Preserve Lutsotso Oral Traditions Through Pragmatic Analysis

Discourse particles are deeply embedded in cultural norms and oral traditions, and their use often reflects indigenous epistemologies and communicative ethics. Community-based language revitalization projects should include analysis and teaching of discourse particles to ensure the survival of culturally bound communication strategies. Elders and native speakers should be involved in recording oral performances, including stories, proverbs, and debates that highlight the nuanced use of discourse particles.

6. Develop a Cross-disciplinary Discourse Corpus for Lutsotso

To further assess discourse particles contextually and under the lens of Relevance Theory, a broad and diverse linguistic corpus is necessary. Create a digitized, annotated corpus of Lutsotso interactions across different contexts (formal/informal, gendered, generational, topical). Include metadata that captures contextual information to support pragmatic and relevance-based analysis.

Suggestions for Further Studies

Here are suggestions for further studies based on the examination of contextual discourse particles in Lutsotso interactions with the given objectives:

1. Comparative Analysis of Discourse Particles Across Dialects of Luhya

Future research can compare the use and functions of discourse particles in Lutsotso with those in other Luhya dialects such as Maragoli, Wanga, or Bukusu, to identify both shared and unique pragmatic strategies.

2. Diachronic Study of Discourse Particles in Lutsotso

Investigate how the use and meanings of discourse particles in Lutsotso have evolved over time, especially under the influence of language contact with Swahili or English.

3. Discourse Particles in Written vs. Spoken Lutsotso

Explore how discourse particles manifest in written forms of the language (e.g., storytelling, social media, religious texts) versus oral interactions, and what this reveals about their function and adaptability.

4. Gendered Use of Discourse Particles

Examine whether and how gender influences the use of discourse particles among Lutsotso speakers, especially in different contexts like public discourse, domestic conversations, or traditional rituals.

5. Role of Discourse Particles in Children's Language Development

Investigate how Lutsotso children acquire and use discourse particles as they develop pragmatic competence, and how this reflects cultural norms of interaction.

6. Discourse Particles and Politeness Strategies

Extend the analysis to a broader study of politeness theory in Lutsotso interactions, focusing on how discourse particles encode respect, mitigation, disagreement, or face-saving strategies.

7. Experimental Pragmatic Approaches

Employ experimental or psycholinguistic methods to test how Lutsotso listeners process discourse particles in real time, to validate or refine theoretical claims from relevance theory and discourse pragmatics.

8. Multimodal Discourse and Gesture Integration

Examine how discourse particles in Lutsotso are used alongside gestures, tone, and facial expressions, especially in emotionally charged or persuasive discourse.

9. Corpus-based Study of Lutsotso Discourse

Develop a digital corpus of Lutsotso interactions and use it to conduct a large-scale quantitative analysis of discourse particles, enabling more generalized insights across contexts.

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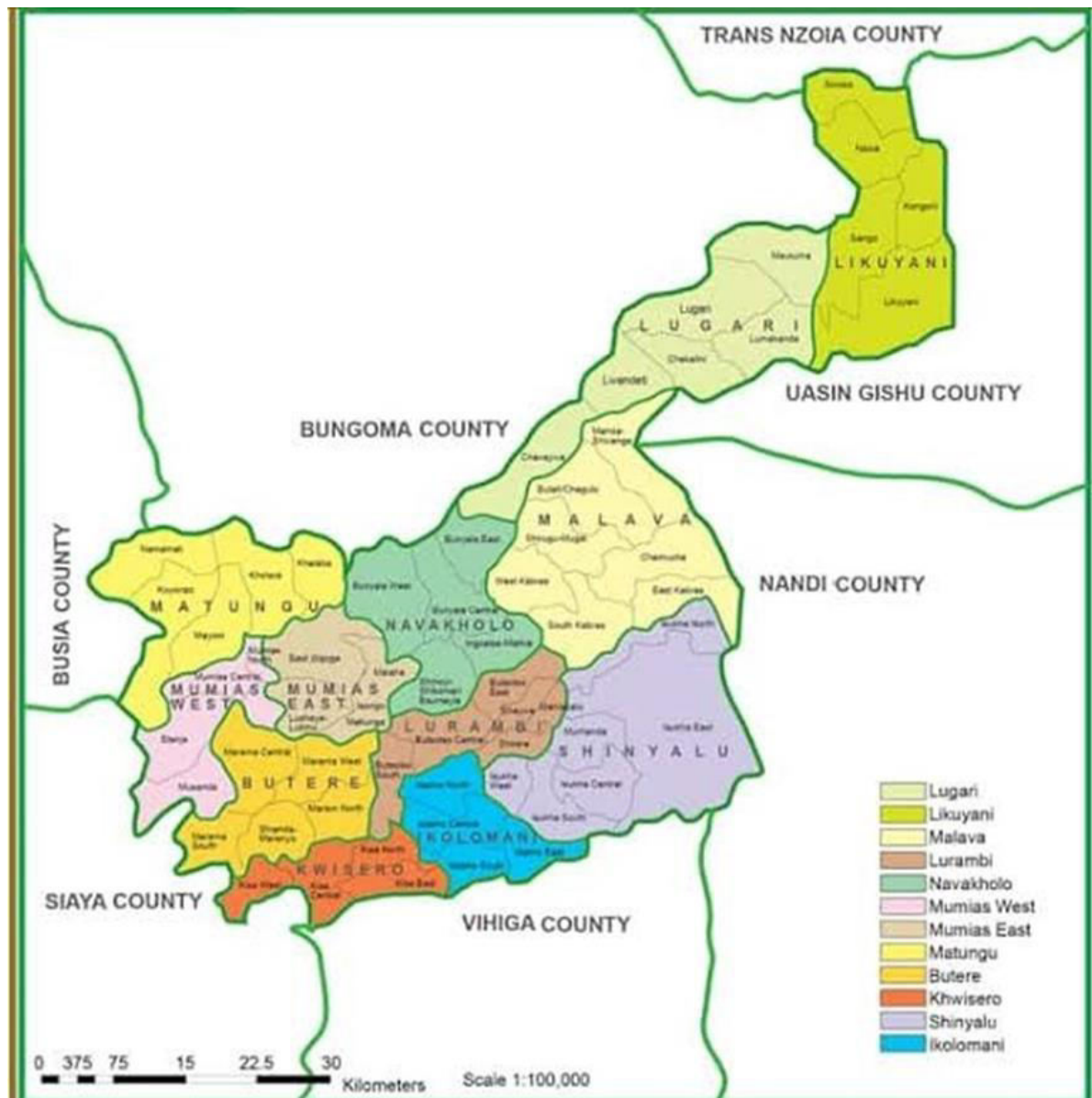
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Appendices

Appendix I: The Map of Lurambi Subcounty Showing the Luhya Subtribes



Appendix II: Observation Sheet for Interactions in Lutsotso

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Appendix III: Research Approval from the Directorate of Postgraduate Stu



MASINDE MULIRO UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
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Institutional Scientific and Ethics Review Committee

P. O. Box 190,
50100.
Kakamega,
KENYA

To: Mr. Joel Shikundi Ongolo

Date: September 18th 2024

Dear Mr. Ongolo

RE: A PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF DISCOURSE PARTICLES IN LUTSOTSO.

This is to inform you that the *Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology Institutional Scientific and Ethics Review Committee (MMUST-ISERC)* has reviewed and approved your above research proposal. Your application approval number is **MMUST/ ISERC/083/2024**. The approval covers for the period *September 18th, 2024 to September 18th, 2025*.

This approval is subject to compliance with the following requirements;

- i. Only approved documents including informed consents, study instruments, MTA will be used.
- ii. All changes including (amendments, deviations, and violations) are submitted for review and approval by **MMUST-ISERC**.
- iii. Death and life threatening problems and serious adverse events or unexpected adverse events whether related or unrelated to the study must be reported to **MMUST-ISERC** within 72 hours of notification
- iv. Any changes, anticipated or otherwise that may increase the risks or affected safety or welfare of study participants and others or affect the integrity of the research must be reported to **MMUST-ISERC** within 72 hours
- v. Clearance for export of biological specimens must be obtained from relevant institutions.
- vi. Submission of a request for renewal of approval at least 60 days prior to expiry of the approval period. Attach a comprehensive progress report to support the renewal.
- vii. Submission of an executive summary report within 90 days upon completion of the study to **MMUST-ISERC**.

Prior to commencing your study, you will be expected to obtain a research license from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) <https://research-portal.nacosti.go.ke> and also obtain other clearances needed

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Gordon Nguka', is written over a faint blue circular stamp.

Prof. Gordon Nguka (PhD)
Chairperson, Institutional Scientific and Ethics Review Committee

Copy to:

- The Secretary, National Bio-Ethics Committee
- Vice Chancellor
- DVC (PR&I)

Appendix IV: Research Approval from NACOSTI



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

Ref No: **577986**

RESEARCH LICENSE



This is to Certify that Mr.. JOEL SHIKUNDI ONGOLO of Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, has been licensed to conduct research as per the provision of the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 (Rev.2014) in Kakamega on the topic: A Pragmatic Analysis of Discourse Particles in Lutsotso for the period ending : 28/September/2025.

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